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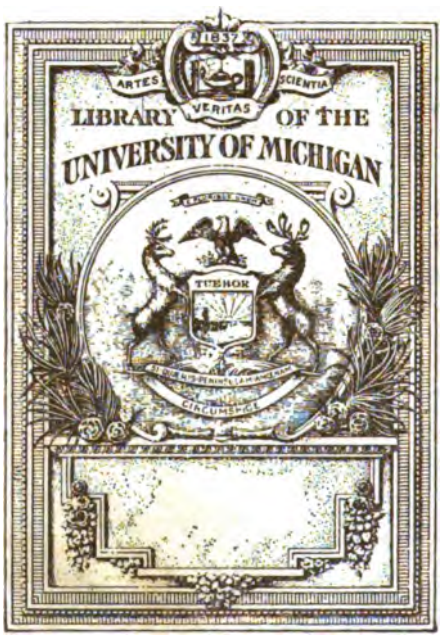
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THE MARSHAL

"Come back again—Come back again," they called from the shore.

THE MARSHAL

By

MARY RAYMOND SHIPMAN ANDREWS

Author of

THE PERFECT TRIBUTE
THE BETTER TREASURE, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

ANDRÉ CASTAIGNE

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This book is dedicated to a man who has for years had stories read to him. All the stories of this writer. Whether his sort of stories or not, whether in the mood for them or not, he has listened with interest unfailing, and his friendly criticisms, earnestly solicited, have many times been met with surprise, indignation, and reflections on the critic's literary qualifications. It is fitting, therefore, that a thank-offering of my first long story should be dedicated to him—audience, critic and comrade through all of them—

My Gentlest Reader

WILLIAM SHANKLAND ANDREWS

336165

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YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

On the wall of the large hall of a house in Virginia hang two portraits side by side. Both are of young men, both in uniform; one in the dark blue coat and the white and red of an infantry officer of the French Empire, the other in that scarlet shirt which came to be a flag, almost as much as a dress, to the heroic band of insurgents who struggled for free Italy against the Austrians. The master of the Virginia house, coming into it to-day, meets always those two pairs of eyes—the eyes of his grandfather the Marquis and of a French peasant to whom his grandfather's youth was linked by ties of more than brotherhood.

It is the chronicle of the latter which is here written. Yet woven into it, as in truth it happened, is so much of the life of the Marquis Zappi that for any one reading that chronicle it will be easy to surmise how it happened that the grandson of Pietro rules now in Carnifax, the Virginian house where Pietro's friend found asylum after his imprisonment under the Austrians. It will be easy to surmise how the foreign names of this story are the names shouted one to another to-day by American girls and boys under the live-oaks of that Virginia lawn; how a François and an Alixe and a Pietro and a Gaspard play together in the new world as others of their names played, a century back, in an older country.

In the drawer of an old desk in the Carnifax library is a package of yellowed letters. The children—Alixe

and François and Gaspard and Pietro—are allowed to touch them sometimes and are told how precious they are, and a little of the reason why. They are shown the signatures on the letters of a Prince who became Emperor of France, of an officer of the first Napoleon, of their own great-grandfather, the last Italian Marquis Zappi, the splendid, big old man whose gentleness and whose lameness the oldest of them can just remember —for Pietro never quite got well from that fall under his horse which kept him from fighting for Prince Louis at Boulogne. Then, as the most wonderful thing, the father shows them, last of all, letters in the writing, with the big black signature, of one whom they call "the Marshal," and one youngster tells to another—for they all know it—some bit of his story. How he climbed the church steeple; how he saved the Prince in the ruins; how he escaped from the prison castle; the father tries to point out to them how courageous and unselfish a career it was and in what a manner it was crowned with all his heart's desire, and entire happiness. But the children do not listen very well to that, for they are young and want facts. Yet, as they tumble out into the hall, they are likely to stop a moment before the portraits, considering. François stares hard at the picture in the uniform of the Empire, of the young man with large brown eyes, whose fire the artist has caught not badly.

"He was very brave and very good," young François says proudly, as a child says words many times repeated to him. "I have his name. I shall try to be like him."

It is perhaps enough of success for a life that a child coming after should find in it a standard to measure his own. Yet, those who knew the first François believed that no other could be like him. M. R. S. A.

THE MARSHAL

THE MARSHAL

CHAPTER I

A PROPHECY

IT was François who had his way. Pierre clamored for the story of the old witch and the horses; Marie begged to hear about the white ducks and the princess; Tomas, at the top of his lungs, demanded the episode of the man who fell off the church steeple; each child wished a particular tale. Half a dozen high, little French voices floated shrilly out into the garden, on a sunshiny morning of 1820 from the great entry of an old farm-house in the valley under the Jura Mountains. The grandmother, sitting white-capped in the center of the hubbub, heard one more willingly than the others, for not only was François her best loved, but also the story he asked for was the story she liked to tell.

In the large kitchen beyond the open door the sun lay in patches on the bare scrubbed floor, and the mother moved swiftly, getting dinner ready

against twelve o'clock, when the father should come in from the fields; it was the *grand-mère's* hour to amuse the children. And to-day they were all pleading at once for a story, clapping hands, jumping up and down as if life depended on the choice. Suddenly, in the excess of enthusiasm, Tomas and François and Pierre were in a heap, sprawling at her feet on the earth floor of the entry.

"Stop, stop," said the grandmother. "Good children do not go so fast," and she carefully sorted out the heap. "You, François, you are too quick—you will finish by hurting yourself. Stand here quiet, near me, and listen well," and, her arm about him, she drew the boy close.

"You will tell my tale, *grand-mère*—the tale of 'Napoleon Comes'?" he asked eagerly, and the grandmother smiled; it was what she wished to tell.

And now, with the faces of the children turned toward her, she pushed the big horn-framed glasses up on her brow, buried her knitting needles deep in scarlet wool, and folding her work carefully, laid it in the work-box. All five watched the ceremony, the methodical habit of a lifetime, and little Marie gave a trembling sigh as it ended. Only that sound broke the stillness, and in a moment the grandmother's voice began.

"François, if you pinch your brother you are not a good child, and can not listen to the story," she admonished. "Be quiet, then, and you shall hear how the Emperor came to this house, and sat in the great room there—Napoleon!"

The five pairs of eyes followed hers as she glanced toward the door. "Yes, at that table he sat," the gentle voice went on, "with his great officers about him, with their uniforms and bright facings and gold buttons, and their swords clanking as they walked, and their three-cornered hats, waving with plumes, on their heads. But *tiens*—I must go back—I must tell it rightly, the story of Napoleon." At the name the grandmother's head seemed to lift, and dignity was in her manner. The boy against her arm, his brown eyes, of uncommon size and intensity, fastened on hers, thrilled.

"Yes, *grand-mère,* from the beginning," he said earnestly.

Smiling again, the grandmother began. "You must know, my children, that it was on a day in the month of May, in the year 1813, that he came. You, Lucie, and you, Pierre, and Marie were not born, only François and Tomas. François was the older —not quite three years old. The mother had gone to care for your Aunt Lucie, who was ill, and I kept

the house for your father. It was the year of the great conscription, when the Emperor took all the men to fight, not only the strong ones, but the boys, and the old and infirm, if they might but drag themselves at the tail of a regiment. So the few men who were not under the flag were sorely needed by their families, for it was necessary, if the women and children were not to starve, that some should stay to work in the fields. Your father was of the few who had escaped in our village of Vicques.

"One morning a man appeared in the village and said that Napoleon would pass this way within a few hours. No one quite believed, yet there was excitement, and the people stood about chattering, restless, when suddenly—I can see it as if it were yesterday—a half dozen horsemen clattered from the turn of the road up there and galloped down the street and on beyond. The crowd stared. Then every one talked at once; there was a great confusion. But at last a good old man, well known to us all, raised his hand for silence, and as we listened he told us that probably it was not the great army which would pass through Vicques, but only Napoleon and his staff. We were not on the road which led to Germany, and the great army was hurrying there. It was probable that the Emperor

turned from his road to take the lists of men and of resources in the village."

There was a stir against the grandmother's arm. *"Comment?"* she asked.

"Please, *grand-mère,* don't tell what the old man said," François spoke. "It is so long before you come to Napoleon." The child's manner was impetuous, but very winning. The old woman felt the charm of it.

"You are always eager, François," she said. "Very well, then. Two young men were placed down the road to warn us, so that the men of the place might hide on the mountain to escape being taken for soldiers. All that day nothing happened, but the next morning toward half past ten, as I prepared the dinner, there was a sudden noise in the street, and your father came in.

" 'My mother,' he said, 'Napoleon comes.'

"Outside I heard the neighbors calling the same two words—'Napoleon comes'—one called it to another. If the trumpet of the angel had sounded the end of the world, they could not have had more fear. Then your father kissed me, and kneeled and held you, François, and Tomas, in his arms, and I saw tears, but he was brave—but yes. 'Courage,

little mother,' he said, 'for me and for the babies. Courage.'

"And at that your father, who was my little lad once, you know, my dears, had gone, and I stood with an ache where my heart should have been, and for a moment I was stupid and could not think. François held to my apron, and I lifted Tomas. 'What are you crying about, naughty *grand-mère?*' asked Tomas. So I dried the tears, and François began to say that he was sleepy. I undressed him and the baby and put them to bed for their nap in the little chamber which opens into the great one, and as I left them asleep and came again into the large room there, with its great oak table, I stood a moment and thought of your dear father flying through the woods, and of how I was left to take care of his home and his children. And the thought of a duty to be done brought calmness.

"As I stood so, like a blow there was a rush of galloping horses in a shower of noise down the street, and my heart stopped, for the horses drew up at this house. So that I was still in the middle of the floor when the door opened—"

François' hand was laid against her cheek. "The door into the great entry—that door there?" he demanded in a whisper.

"But yes, *mon p'tit*—that door."

Four pairs of round eyes followed François' gaze that turned to the panels of heavy oak.

"It opened, that door there, and against the light I saw men crowding in the entry. They wore uniforms of bright colors, and swords hung at their sides, and on their heads were hats with trimmings of gold. Then I saw—Napoleon. I knew him at once, though I had never seen his face, though his figure was perhaps the smallest. One knows the lion from the common beasts. I stood quietly, remembering only that I must guard my son's children, and he spoke. With a step toward me he spoke in a kind voice, half smiling.

" 'Madame,' he said, 'will you let us use this room and this table for an hour? You shall not be disturbed in your work.' "

The grandmother stopped and lifted her hand, and her head was up as if listening. *"Tiens!* I hear his voice now!" she whispered, and the children started, as if expecting to catch a note of the tones that had sounded here—the tones that had carried across the world. The story went on.

"I made my courtesy to these great gentlemen as I had been taught, and I found myself saying quite easily to his majesty the Emperor, as easily as if I

talked to *Monsieur le Curé,* to whom I was accustomed, that he was welcome; that I would serve him gladly if he wished to command me. And then I left them. There was that about the great Emperor which made one happy to be of use to him. I did not understand it, but I felt it, as I had heard the men talk about it who had seen him. My son was flying from him, he was draining the land of our men, of our comfort and happiness, and yet here I was, willing and glad to do the least or the greatest thing for him. He was more than a man, Napoleon. As I left the room, at the door I saw a big soldier with an enormous fur shako on his head and a saber in his hand, who mounted guard, and there were at each door and at each window soldiers on guard—think of that, my children—our peaceful house surrounded with grand soldiers. I could not help being a little proud as I saw it. And before the entry here a crowd of huge horses stamped and snorted, so full of spirit that the grooms could scarcely hold them. I went quietly into the kitchen and began, as in the ordinary way, to get dinner, but I was so dazed with what was happening that I was not entirely capable. I could not seem to make the soup as usual. When, suddenly, I heard a child cry, and with no thought then but of my babies, I

flew to the door of the great room and stood looking, for I could not pass the sentinel.

"Among the officers in their uniforms there lay on the floor little François in his night-dress, and all the officers looked at him and laughed—a great shout of laughing which drowned the sound of my coming. I knew later what had happened, for the mayor of the village was there with his lists, and he told me. The child, sleeping in the farther room, had waked at the voices and had climbed down from his crib and toddled out to see. The glitter of the uniforms must have pleased him, and as they all bent over the papers on the table he had pulled at the sword of one whom I afterward knew to be the great Marshal Ney. He wore a dark coat all heavy with gold lace, my children, and white pantaloons and high shining black boots, and across his breast a scarlet ribbon. He sat next the Emperor. The marshal, turning sharply at the tug, knocked the little one over. It was then François cried out, and I ran to him. But when I reached the door a young general, whose name I never knew, had set the child on his feet, and the others, some standing about him, some sitting in their chairs, which they pushed back to see better, some leaning across the table, all stared at him. Without doubt it was a

sight which they had not seen lately, a baby in its night-dress, and without doubt it seemed homelike to some. However that may be, they were laughing like schoolboys, and it was Napoleon himself who spoke as I peered under the sentinel's arm. He shook his finger at his officer.

"'Marshal, Marshal,' he cried, 'are you not too quick to overthrow so young a soldier, so full of love for arms?'

"And he put out his hand and pinched the little one's ear, which I have heard was a sign of good humor from the Emperor. The marshal laughed also, and the young general who had set the child on his feet spoke quickly.

"'Your Majesty,' he said, and he patted the little head as he said it, *'Monsieur le Maréchal* owes a reparation to this soldier of the empire. Will not your Majesty order him to draw the sword which is contested between them and confer knighthood with it? It is an ancient custom, the accolade, and would settle the difference between these gentlemen very pleasantly.'

"And the officers laughed again noisily as the general spoke of the great marshal and the little white-gowned baby as 'these gentlemen'. But Napoleon drew his eyebrows together—yet he smiled.

" 'Not the marshal,' he said, 'but I will do it. As you say, General, the accolade is an old right of kings, unused for centuries, but none the less a right—held in abeyance. I am the monarch of France'—and his voice was like the flash of a blade —'I am the monarch of France,' he said, 'and I may give nobility where I choose. For his courage I shall knight this young Frenchman; who knows but his life may some time mean much to me or my house? There are queer twists in the rope of history—a throne might depend on this lad's spirit as well as on another's.' The Emperor seemed to joke, for he laughed a little, yet there was a sound in his voice as if some part was serious. He turned sharply to the mayor. 'What is the child's name?'

"The mayor was our friend and knew the babies. 'François Beaupré, Sire,' he answered tremblingly.

"The Emperor gave a short nod to the general, who still kept his hand on the dark little head. 'Make him kneel,' he said. 'Marshal, your sword.'

"The blade clattered out of the sheath in front of the baby's eyes, and he blinked as he looked up, but did not draw away an inch, and as the young general pressed him to his fat knees he put his hands together and shut his eyes, for he thought he was to pray to the good God. So the child knelt before

the Emperor, thinking of his prayers. It was still for a moment, and all the officers stood up silent, and then the Emperor took the marshal's sword and struck the baby's shoulder a light blow with the flat of it.

"'Rise Chevalier François Beaupré,' he said clearly, and in the pause he added, with a look in his eyes as if one gazed forward: 'Some day, perhaps, a Marshal of France under another Bonaparte.'"

The grandmother's voice stopped, and the garden and the entry that had been full of the jingle of harness and the clatter of steel, the stir and color of soldiery, was suddenly hushed and empty. The ghosts of the great which had risen at the simple magic of her memory dissolved into mists of past years. But the glory and the awe of the name of the Emperor hung about them. The children huddled, their eyes devouring her, their faces close, listening yet. A little girl's voice spoke.

"And, *grand-mère,* it was—"

"It was François," she said, and laid her hand on his shoulder. "The sword of the Emperor touched him here—I saw it." The child's frame quivered as if he felt again that blow of the accolade.

Then Tomas, always unimpressed, began to sing jeeringly:

"François Beaupré,
Nous dévous l'admirer—
Notre grand chevalier,
François Beaupré—"

And the spell was broken. The children scattered, shouting, out into the sunshine of the garden. But François stood at his grandmother's side, not hearing or seeing them; staring at the heavy panels of the oak door as if he beheld the figures of Napoleon and his generals pass that way again, and in his child eyes smoldered the inner light of a seer of visions.

CHAPTER II

THE STRANGER

AT the end of the long street of Vicques, next the church, stood the house of François Beaupré, the father of little François and Tomas and the rest. The villagers called him "Le François" and his wife "La Claire"; this showed them of a certain importance, for one spoke as if there were no others. The house was the largest in the village, and its great earth-floored entry, leading at the right into the living-rooms, at the left into the stable, was twenty feet square. There, on sunshiny spring days, the grandmother would sit on the long bench against the wall, always with her knitting, always with the children about her, and the cows would file past and into the wide doorway at the left, switching their tails, with mild big eyes gazing gently at the group. In front was the flower garden, and little Lucie's head was not so tall as the patch of red peonies whose great blossoms the breeze tossed in one corner of it.

A beautiful garden it was, the finest in the village, yet this was not the pride of "La Claire", the wife of "Le François". She had two vanities, the neighbors said: her tiny feet and her garden, but not this garden of flowers. Outside of the village, half a mile away, on the road to the old château, were the fields where, laid out in trim rows, flourished all the vegetables of all the villagers. The little houses sat in the long street, the old *voie Romaine,* the Roman road built before the Christian era and still kept up. The houses were set too closely to allow space for the great beds of cabbages, beans, peas, turnips, parsley, endive, chicory, carrots. So the cottages nestled elbow to elbow in the street, and the gardens in the fields outside—one might see them by looking—stretched even long fingers through the valley almost to the slope that led to the ruined castle.

François, the lad, liked to be sent there with his mother's big basket to bring back vegetables for the family meal. It was quiet in the long sunshiny rows of growing things, and the earthy smell was pleasant, and a boy who had much to think about could think well as he broke off stems of chard or dug into the clean damp brown earth for lettuce—*"la salade"*. Moreover, he would ask sometimes:

"Must I hurry to-day, mother? Might I go on to the château for a little while?"

And often La Claire would smile at the boy and answer: "But yes, my François, you may go; there is no hurry."

And then came hours to be remembered. François remembered them many years after. He would set the basket carefully in a safe spot at the very end of the row of white-grown lettuce heads, and then he would cross the field, brushing through the millions of scarlet poppies, higher than the blades of wheat, and climb up the steep hillside and scramble over the fence, and be in the old castle. It was a good road, because the people of Vicques used it often for going to and from the pastures at the foot of the mountain, with the cows. At the end was a gate which closed the way to wagons or cattle; however, a person on foot might open it and go beyond. Inside were the ruins.

On an afternoon in July in the year of 1820, François, being ten years old and a dreamer, came alone through the gate and sat down with his short legs dangling over an ancient wall, fifteen feet sheer down. He sat there, quite comfortable and secure, and kicked his heels, and thought of his brilliant future, and also of the story of the great dog and

the treasure. This ruin, the ancient château of Vicques, had a legend. Each child of the village knew it before he could remember how—it had been so with all of them always—grandfathers had heard it from grandfathers for hundreds of years. The tradition ran that ages back, in the time of Cæsar, fifty years after Christ, a Roman governor in this Gallic province had built a formidable castle on this hill outside the village—*"Vicus"*, the Romans called it simply, "the village"—and "Vicus", changed to "Vicques", it has stayed. The castle had great granaries to hold the grain which the governor tortured from the peasants and sent to Rome to sell. This little *"vicus"* was on the main road to Rome, which made it convenient for the governor. So he grew rich by oppression, and the gold wrung from the people he piled in cellars deep in his castle. When it came to be a great amount he sent far to the north and got a huge dog, and this dog he trained to a terrible fierceness, so that any one coming near him in the long underground corridors where he guarded the treasure was sure to be torn in pieces, except always the governor. The governor knew well that the people hated him, even those closest to him, and this savage beast was his only friend, and his reliance.

For years things went on in this way, the governor grinding the peasants, and the giant dog guarding him and his treasure, till at last there came a thunderbolt—the governor was sent for to come to Rome to give an account of the riches which he had kept from the emperor. He had to go, but he left the dog in charge, and the night after he was gone the peasantry gathered and set fire to the château and burned it to the ground, and the dog and the treasure were buried in it, and there they are to this day. The people of Vicques believe that if a man will go to dig for that treasure and will stay till midnight, that at twelve exactly a colossal dog will rise from the ruined stones and come, breathing flames; in his mouth will be the key of the treasure-vault, and back of him will stand the ghost of the Roman governor wrapped in white, his face covered. And if the man will be bold enough to take the key from the flaming mouth, then dog and governor will vanish in a clap of thunder, and in front of the daring one will rise the door of the treasure-vault, and he may turn the key and go in and help himself. The people of Vicques believe this because the grandfathers have known from their grandfathers how there were men in old times braver than common who stayed till midnight in the ruins and saw

the dog and the ghost—but none was brave enough ever to take the key from the dog's mouth.

The child François, his heels hanging over the drop of the ancient wall, the shadows of a large chestnut tree playing back and forth across his little figure and across the broken piles of grass-grown stones which had been the castle granaries, revolved this tale in his mind. The picture of the huge dog breathing fire and that ghostly vision of the pitiless governor, white, face-covered, dimly outlined in the shadows, gave the boy a thrill of agreeable horror, but not a thrill of fear. Fear had been, those who knew him said, left out of this lad.

"He does not think of himself," said the grandmother proudly, "so he can not fear for himself."

François considered, and, feeling no fear in his soul, decided that he was the man destined to take the key out of the dog's mouth and get the treasure, which he would at once transfer intact to his mother. He had no need for treasure; there were things more important. It was for him to become a Marshal of France. Napoleon had said so; it must be so; but he should like, on the way to this goal, to face the dog and take the key and give his mother the treasure. He knew she would like it, for he had heard her say to his father only yester-

day, "Ah, François, if we had a little more silver we could do that!" It would be pleasant to arrange that for his mother, and shortly after to become a Marshal of France.

In the gaiety of the thought, and feeling both ambitions all but accomplished by his decision, he lifted himself on the palms of his hands and kicked out lightly over the abyss. As he kicked there was a sudden strong grip on his shoulder; he was jerked backward and rolled on the grass.

"Are you tired of life at this age then?" a strident voice demanded, and François lay on his back and regarded, wondering, at ease, the bronzed lined face of a big man standing over him. The two stared, and then: "You believe yourself to be an eagle, and you are on the point of flying? Is that it?" The abrupt virile voice threw the questions at him, and François smiled sunnily. He knew this to be sarcasm, though he did not know that name for it, and from the sweet soundness of his soul the arrow of sarcasm slid off always as a glancing brightness and left no poison. François smiled; then laughed with assurance of the other's friendliness up into the strange man's face. He got to his feet and stood.

"No, M'sieur," he said politely. "I did not think

myself an eagle. I was only pleased at thinking what I am going to be some day. Something much better than an eagle," and he nodded with a confidence in the stranger's sympathy.

"Ah!" The deep strong voice seemed to be fired like a cannon-shot from the ambush of the bristling mustache. "Great things are likely to happen to you, it seems then, you small peasant. Is it permitted to ask what magnificence it is that you are to be?"

"Certainly it is permitted, M'sieur," François answered in his courageous, courteous way. "I am one day to be a Marshal of France, M'sieur."

The man, big, soldierly, aggressive, and the little peasant boy, gentle, humbly-clad, unafraid, faced each other a minute in silence, each interested simply in the other as in a new experience, each unconscious of himself and of the other's interest.

Then, "Ah!" the man said again. "It is a good business which you have honored by your choice. You are without doubt a close friend of his gracious majesty, King Louis Eighteenth, our ruler?"

"No, M'sieur," little François hastened to set him right. "I am not of that party, M'sieur. Me, I am Bonapartist. I shall one day be a 'Marshal of France under another Bonaparte.'" The lad's large

eyes lifted and his gaze floated away across the afternoon landscape as he quoted in a lowered voice the words which the Emperor had spoken over him.

The stranger watched him, astonished, and then he laid his hand on the slim shoulder in its home-spun blouse, and his grave voice was gentle. "My child, be careful how you say words like those; you may get your father into trouble. It is a good belief to keep in one's heart, and you and I may yet shout *'Vive l'Empereur'* for a Napoleon again. Yes, and you may be Marshal—who knows? But keep your tongue inside your teeth, boy; now is not the time to talk. And do not hang over old walls when the kicking fit is on you, else we shall have one great man less in the world shortly. I must go on. Good day, my friend, the Marshal."

And François, as he had been taught, put his heels together and made a low bow, and answered quite simply, "Good day, M'sieur."

CHAPTER III

WITHOUT FEAR

THE gilder was at work gilding the great ball on top of the church steeple. Every twenty years this had to be done, and it was an event in the village. It was said that it cost much money; there were rumors that it cost as much as a thousand francs. The gilder knew, of course, and the *Curé* knew, but neither of them told. Moreover, it was dangerous, and, like all dangers, fascinating.

The boys of Vicques stood in groups in the street with their heads bent back, watching the tiny figure of a man that crept up an invisible ladder far in the air, lashed to the side of the steeple. Up and up it went, like a fly, crawling on the *flèche,* and there was a sinking feeling in each boy's stomach which was delightful, to think how at any moment that creeping black spot which was the gilder might fall down, down, and be dashed to pieces. They wished no ill to the gilder, who was a stranger not of their village, nevertheless it would be a proud thing to

say that they had seen him killed. Life and suffering mean nothing to a boy, but an event is a pleasure. Many of the girls turned away their heads and cried out, "I can't look; I'm afraid he will be killed." And at this the boys felt superior because they were not afraid but rather hopeful of a catastrophe. There are points of difference between boys and girls.

François, however, did not think about the gilder at all, yet his mind was on the gilding of the ball every minute of the day. He wished earnestly, passionately, to crawl up that ladder and be himself that fly against the *flèche*. He felt that he could not possibly go on living with self-respect, that feat being unaccomplished. He was a good lad and an obedient one normally, and he knew that his father and mother would forbid such an attempt with horror, but that counted for nothing against the strength of his desire. It was a possession, an obsession; the thought drew him as martyrdom draws a fanatic. Three days he watched the work, standing with the other boys, all their dark little heads bent back as their eyes followed the invisible brush which was noiselessly, slowly turning the dull surface of the ball into a golden lamp hung on the blue sky. The boys talked among themselves about it.

"When I am a man I shall do such work," Achille Dufour announced in a bold voice. "Probably I shall be up there some day where the gilder is now, and all of you down below watching me."

And the others jeered frankly. "You—you who fall over a fence—you indeed!" said his cousin Henri scornfully. "But as for me, I would not be afraid to climb up there to-day," and at that there was a chorus of protest.

"Who was it, tell me, who was afraid to climb the flagpole by the church? Who was that boy, Henri Dufour?" demanded Pierrot Tremblay, and the embryo Frenchmen joined in a sarcastic "Ah!" and pointed grimy fingers at the mortified Henri.

"That's nothing," Henri threw back sulkily. "And I was not the only one who was afraid. I offered to climb the pole, and was afraid after—but none of the others even offered. And it was no great shame to me, for it is dangerous to climb that pole. It is twenty feet to the cross-bars, and beyond that it is fifty feet yet to the small cross-bars at the top —it is very high in the air—seventy feet. Only François Beaupré of all the village has yet climbed that flagpole, and all the world knows that François is different. His stomach is different; he has no fear of things, inside him—François."

There was a murmur of assent, and the hero put a friendly hand on the shoulder of the discredited Dufour.

"It's nothing," he agreed. "It's only that I am born different. I do not feel inside my stomach that thing which you say is being afraid. I do not know that feeling, so it is easy. It was not much for me to climb the pole; it was just that I could do it."

And the boys, seeing their honor saved, agreed heartily.

"All the same," Achille Dufour suggested ungratefully, "François would not dare climb that ladder to the ball. Dare you?"

The great brown eyes of François turned about the group; the boys waited eagerly for his answer. If he dared it was almost as if they should all do it; it was always this one who led into the dangerous places; always this one who went a bit further when the others' courage failed; they explained it pleasantly by that fortunate lack in François' inside mechanism which produced in the others the discomfort called fear, hindering bold deeds.

"He has no judgment, François; therefore he fears nothing," they sometimes put the case.

But the fact remained that he was afraid of

nothing. The boys waited a minute, eyes and mouths stretched, and at length came the decision.

"I dare," said François. Then the dark heads came together in an uneasy mass, and there was whispering.

At the dinner-hour that day several mothers of the village remarked that their small lads were restless, not intent as usual on the black bread and the soup of chopped vegetables and the green beans—all anxious to finish and get away. Only the mother of François, however, reasoned from this that mischief was brewing. When the slim, wiry, little figure slipped from the table and out through the open door, she rose and followed and stood in the great entry watching him race across the field toward the church. But at that moment the baby cried and she turned back into the house, and when she looked again the boy had disappeared. Yet it was on her mind that something would happen, and from time to time she left her work and went to the doorway and shaded her eyes, looking for her little lad. Meanwhile François had veered but once in his straight path—to turn to the Philpoteaux cottage, where the gilder lodged while in Vicques.

"How soon will one be at work up there again?" he asked through the window of Auguste Phil-

poteaux sitting at his dinner, and the man answered good-naturedly, enjoying the publicity which made him the most interesting person of the village.

"It may be in half an hour, my boy. Not sooner." And François raced on.

By this time a boy here and a boy there had stolen from their dinner-tables and were gathering in groups down the street, but the elders paid no attention. François disappeared into the church; the boys began to grow breathless.

"It will take some minutes for the stairs," one said, and they waited. Two minutes, three, perhaps five; something rose out of the trap-door leading to the platform from which the steeple sprang—a figure, looking very small so far up above them. Instantly it attached itself, like a crawling fly, to the side of the steeple; it moved upward. Henri Dufour, below in the street, jumped as a hand gripped his arm. He looked up frightened at La Claire.

"Is that my François?" she demanded sternly, but the boy did not need to answer.

With that, by degrees people came from the cottages as at some mysterious warning and stood silent, afraid to breathe, watching the little figure creeping up, up the dizzy narrowing peak of the

church steeple. A rider galloped down the road; seeing the groups, he pulled in his bay horse and his eyes followed the upward glance of the whole village. In spite of the distance, one could tell that it was a child's not a man's figure, glued against the *flèche,* almost, now, at the top.

"Who is it?" he flung at the nearest knot of peasants; his voice was abrupt and commanding.

The men pulled off their caps, and one answered respectfully: "It is little François Beaupré, my Seigneur; it is a child who has no fear; he is almost at the top, but we dread it when he descends. It is dangerous to descend. Yet the child is not afraid—we hope he will come down, and in that case his mother should most certainly give him the stick."

"Mon Dieu!" the man on horseback growled. "If he looks down he is lost; the lad is a born hero or a born lunatic."

The crawling spot up there showed dark in the sunlight against the new gilding of the ball. It stopped; the blot was fixed for a second; another second. From the crowd rose gasps, and excited broken sentences.

"He has the vertigo! He is lost!"

A man spoke that plainly, and Henri Dufour felt Claire's fingers on his arm loosen as if life had gone

out of them. A strange sound came from her lips, but the boy did not stir his eyes from the church steeple. In the stillness he heard a woman yards away whisper as if to herself:

"He will fall now—at this moment."

And the dark blot clung against the gilding. Then suddenly it moved, began to make a slow way downward, and a long sigh, like a ripple on water, ran through the ranks of people. No one spoke; all the eyes watched the little figure slip down, down the unseen ladder in the air. At last it was at the bottom; it disappeared into the trap-door. Every one began to talk volubly at once; a woman cried for joy, then a child spoke in a high voice.

"See," she said shrilly, "the mother of François goes to meet him!"

La Claire was far down the street, gliding toward that church door which was under the steeple. As she reached it the little lad came out, his face flushed, his eyes shining with excitement and triumph. She took his hand silently, hardly looking at him, and turned so, quietly, without a word of either joy or reproof, her face impassive. She had got her boy again from the dead, it seemed to Claire, and those first moments were beyond words or embraces. To touch his warm hand was enough.

The man on the bay horse, trotting slowly along, saw the meeting.

"It is a woman out of the common, that one," he spoke aloud. "She rules herself and the boy." And the boy looked up as he came and smiled and tugged at his cap with the hand which his mother did not hold.

"Good morning, M'sieur," he said with friendliness, and the rider stared.

"Sacré bleu!" he flung back in his strong sudden voice. "It is my friend, the Marshal. Was it you, then, glued up there? Yet another fashion to play with death, eh? *Nom d'un chien!* You have a star of good luck—you are saved for something great, it must be. Madame," he spoke to the mother, "you should guard this adventurer. He tells me that his life is of importance to his country, yet he risks it with damnable freedom. I caught him kicking over a precipice, and here he is running his neck into danger again. France will lack a marshal and you to blame—yet he is hard to kill, I confess it."

"He is hard to guard, my Seigneur," La Claire answered seriously. "I never know the next danger. He is more obedient than the others, yet it is he who will make my hair gray. But he is good, my François," and her arm slipped around the boy.

She drew him close, as if only now realizing how nearly she had lost him. "I believe it is simply that fear is left out of him, as they say in the village. He does not know how to be afraid, *le petit.*"

The stranger turned a glance like a blow on the little fellow. "François," he demanded, "what made you still so long at the top of the ladder just now? Were you afraid?"

"No, M'sieur," the child answered. "I was not afraid. I was looking at the château—the new château. There is some one living in it now, M'sieur. I thought as I looked that when I grew big and an officer, I might go there and place my soldiers about that château. I arranged how to attack it very well. I also arranged how to defend it. There should be infantry to take the little gates while the cavalry kept the defenders busy at the great gate."

The bay horse, restive, whirled and plunged sidewise; the rider sat close yet loose as he played the reins, and in a moment had the beast facing again toward the boy and the woman. His brows down, he stared at the lad with his keen hard glance, but he spoke to the mother.

"Madame," he said, "it is a soldier you have there. I have not heard of another boy who lingers

at the top of church steeples to plan military operations. He has a love for the business—if he have the genius also he may go far. He should be instructed." The two waited, attentive, a little astonished to be noticed so long, and then the heavy brows lifted and a smile came into the stern eyes, making them astonishingly kind. "It is my poor house which you have honored with your reflections, M'sieur the Marshal," he flung at François. "Come and see me there in the château, and I will help you arrange the attack against it. Good day."

There was a clatter of galloping hoofs; the bay mare and her rider were far down the street.

"Who is it, my mother—the fierce gentleman?" François asked.

"You are fortunate to-day, François," Claire answered him. "The good God has saved your life from a very great foolishness, and also I think you have made a friend. It is the new seigneur."

CHAPTER IV

COMING TO HIS OWN

POSSIBLY the greatest human quality is creativeness. It is an echo of the most characteristic divine quality. Napoleon I. was essentially a creator. He breathed into France the breath of a life not before there; he took disorganized masses and made of them invincible armies. He clipped territories from countries and made of them kingdoms; beyond all, he made men. A hero is often crisis-born; Napoleon made the crises and shaped heroes to fit them. Again and again he drew out from the mass of common clay a lump in which his master glance saw the leaven of possibility; he breathed his own conquering, limitless spirit into it, and in a turn the automatom was a great general, ready to do his work, bound to him for life by a chain of devotion unbreakable, unreasoning, self-sufficient, a mystery of that astounding personality.

He made great men and then in his lordly way he set them in frames which suited his fastidious sense

of fitness. Out of old France's domains he helped himself to lands and castles and gave them with a free hand to his marshals and his generals.

Six years ago, before Waterloo, he had given the new château of Vicques and its lands to General the Baron Gaspard Gourgaud, whom he had before then fashioned into a very good pattern of a soldier out of material left over from the old aristocracy. Vicques was a village when "all Gaul was divided into three provinces" of Rome; a village much the same in 1820. It lay in the Valley Delesmontes—"of the mountains"—a league from the little city Delesmontes, whose six thousand inhabitants constituted it the chief city of this valley of the Jura. Over Vicques hung the mountain called Le Rosé, behind Le Rosé loomed that greater mountain called Le Raimeu; back of Le Raimeu rolled the Jura range. The ancient road of the days of Julius Cæsar ran through Vicques, runs now, the main road straight to Rome. It is kept up at present by the government and one may see a man working on it any day. A little river cuts across the hamlet —the Cheulte; over it arches, steep, like a crooked finger, unbelievably steep, the Roman bridge built in those same times before France was, and used now every hour of every day. Solid and age-defy-

ing and dignified, it goes about its business of holding the land together from one day to another as it has done for two thousand years, as it may do, to all appearances, for two thousand more. The old road passes over the old bridge high into air and makes an "elbow" as the villagers put it, at its foot, swinging down stream at a right angle; a team of horses rattling down the slope gathers such an impetus that often they bump into the barn of Pierre Beauramé, built stolidly at the turn of the elbow, before their driver can stop them. One wonders why the grandfather of the grandfather of Pierre built his barn at this place, but there it stands, and the horses must accustom themselves.

It is a quaint old village sitting under its mountains, gay with its gardens and poppy fields, strung on its little river and its old, old highway, tied together with its steep-arched bridge. The general looked about him with approval when he rode down of a morning from the "new" château on the hill. The new château, the castle, is a thousand years old, built before the Crusades, in the time of Charlemagne, but yet habitable. It stands not distant from and on the same spur of Le Rosé as the old Roman château, that pile of tumbled ruins which François loved. The castle is a massive square of gray stone

with a pointed roof of red tile; four towers flank it, two battlemented, two with spires red tiled. Windows narrow and high and round, *meurtrières* in the towers, prick the stretch of masonry; the front façade is battlemented; a hedge of thorns fifteen feet high reaches a delicate green arm about its strength; half a mile back, a stone wall, battlemented, too, defends the place from attack on the mountain side; the mountain rises sharply eight hundred feet high behind. A park of beech trees stands stately about the castle; above it one sees only the red roofs, and the towers, and glimpses of gray stone. It was like this in the year 1200; it is like this to-day.

The Baron-General Gourgaud, taking possession in this month of July, thought it lucky he had not seen this domain of his before, else the vision would have turned his heart from his duty. After a full career almost in boyhood—for the Cross of the Legion of Honor had come to him at twenty-four—after service in the Spanish and Austrian campaigns and diplomatic missions; after saving the Emperor's life at Moscow; after Waterloo, Napoleon had chosen him as one of three officers to go with him to St. Helena. The château and estate of Vicques had been given to him by the Emperor

after that brave and lucky moment at Moscow when, the first man to enter the Kremlin, he had snatched the match from a mass of gunpowder which would a moment later have blown up both officers and Emperor. But, what with battles and diplomacy, what with the years at St. Helena and the years in England after, he had not till this summer of 1820 seen his property. Now, at once his heart went out to it, and he loved it as naturally, as whole-heartedly as if it had come to him through a line of ancestors. The splendid, gray, old pile, the wide green fields, the little village nestling to its castle—all this seemed to the soldier of fortune not a strange new luxury but like coming to his own.

Ten years before he had married; four years after that his wife had died, and the daughter she left was now a girl of seven, a fairy type of girl, airily and daintily made, quick-footed and quick-witted; unexpected, too, like a fairy, and with a brave and obstinate spirit which gratified her soldier father every day.

"You are perfect in every way but one, Alixe," he said, as he swung her high to kiss her. "You are—"

"I know," the little girl interrupted, comrade-like,

"I know the fault I have. I am not a boy. But I do not wish to be a boy, father. I would then grow to be a great fierce person with a mustache—like you. Imagine me, father, with a mustache," and the two laughed together. "Men are more like the brutes, like the horses or tigers or lions—like you, father. It is only women who are really people—*du monde.*"

"Indeed!" General Gourgaud received the statement with his heavy brows in a tremendous frown, and his eyes gleaming with pride in the defiance. "Is it so, my daughter? I am lucky to have some one who is really a person to save me from being a brute altogether. But all the same, you grand lady and person, you can not hand down the name of Gourgaud. You will fly off some day to a brute with a mustache, and leave your father alone in this big château, is it not?" He knew her answer, but he liked to hear it.

"I shall never marry anybody," Alixe announced. "I can not ever love any one like my father."

In spite of the satisfaction which this speech gave him, it was a sadness to the baron that no grandchild of his name would live in this château which he had so soon loved so much. He thought of it many times, and the more keenly he felt the joy of

his life the more keenly he felt this missing thread in its pattern. Yet it seemed a disloyalty to Alixe when the memory of the little peasant boy with the large dark eyes came to him as he told stories to his daughter in the twilight. The story of the battle of Ratisbon it was to-night, and how he had gone down into that "glorious ditch" and swarmed up the ladder with the French troops under fire.

Alixe's blue eyes flashed and her hands clutched his coat lapels—she loved the tale. Yet into the mind of Gaspard Gourgaud shot the idea that if he were telling it to a boy of his, he might dream how that boy would march away some day and do such a deed with a memory of his father in his soul. Yet no boy could ever have been as dear to him as this girl, gentle and spirited, elusive, caressing, sweetest always in the world.

CHAPTER V

HIS STAR

"FATHER, father!" Alixe dashed into the library the morning after the tale of Ratisbon.

"I told you, Mademoiselle, that I was not to be troubled. I am writing my book," the general thundered at the little figure.

Alixe was not impressed. "Do not drop your eyebrows in that way;" she put a forefinger on each bushy line. "It makes you so ugly, father."

He put his arm around her. "What is it you wish? Be quick."

"Oh!" Alixe danced in excitement again. "There is a queer, little, village boy—but a good boy, father. He has brought you a bunch of lettuce—such white fat lettuce! Will you see him? May I bring him here? He is a very good boy."

"Alixe, you are *impayable,*" the general groaned. "I am your plaything! Yes, bring the good little boy—send for all the village—have in the servants —that will help me with my writing."

Alixe, ignoring sarcasm, had flown. In a minute she was back and led by the hand François.

"Ah!" the general greeted him sternly. "My friend, the Marshal! You have already begun the attack on my château, it seems?"

"No, my Seigneur," the boy answered gravely. "Not yet. I bring you some *salade* as a present. It is from my mother's garden. I chose the best."

"I thank you," said the general with seriousness. "I am not sure if your mother will thank you equally. It is a good present."

François was gratified. La Claire had this morning sent him to the gardens with a wide margin of time, and the inspiration had come as he looked down the gleaming row of white lettuce that he would take a tribute and make the visit which the seigneur had asked him to make. The seigneur would be glad of the lettuce, for had not his father said yesterday that it was the best ever grown, that he would wager there was none such in the village, no, not even in the garden of the château. He filled his mother's basket so full that he staggered, and climbed the slope and made his way past the ruins to the left around the lift of Le Rosé, across the Pré du Sac, on to the new château to the great paved courtyard one hundred feet square, past the

stables at the left and on to the door. There a big man, dressed beautifully in violet, had refused to let him in, had even refused to take his lettuce to the seigneur, and the boy was about to go off grieved when a wonderful little girl, also in beautiful clothes, but less lovely than the violet ones, had appeared. Like a fairy she looked, he thought, and like a fairy she had changed everything, and now here he was in the presence of the seigneur, accepting thanks, looking about as much as he might and yet be polite, at the unknown splendors of a room in the château itself.

General Gourgaud brought down his fist on a table so that it rattled and François started—but not Alixe.

"Sabre de bois!" he threw at the two children. "You have ruined my morning between you. I meant to finish those cursed chapters this morning. But let them wait. Having the honor to receive a visit from an officer of high rank, the least I can do is to entertain him. What amusement do you prefer, M'sieur the Marshal? I am at your service."

It was natural to François to believe every one kindly; he accepted with simplicity, if with slight surprise, the general's speech.

"Does the seigneur mean it?" he asked.

"But yes," the general shot at him.

"If the seigneur means it," François went on promptly, "I know what I wish."

"*Parbleu!* you do?" General Gourgaud was surprised in turn at this readiness. "What then?"

"The seigneur has fought battles under the great Emperor himself?" the boy asked in an awed tone.

"Yes," came the abrupt answer again.

"Think!" whispered the French boy. "To have fought under the Emperor!" And the old soldier's heart thrilled suddenly. The child went on. "If the seigneur would tell me a story of one fight—of just one!"

"Ratisbon, Ratisbon!" clamored Alixe, and she scrambled over the arm of his chair to her father's knee and her hand went around his neck. "Tell about Ratisbon and the ditch and the ladders, father. It's true," she nodded at François encouragingly. "It's really true; he was right there." And she went on, addressing the general. "And when that is done, tell about Austerlitz and the soldiers drowning under the ice. And when that is done tell about Wagram and—"

"Halt!" ordered the general. "I have not a week to talk. But I will tell about Ratisbon if you wish." He settled himself into his deep chair and drew the

little girl closer; a dark curl caught on the rough cloth of his coat and lay across his square shoulder; she held his thumb tightly with one hand. The boy stood erect in front of them, his knitted peasant cap in his hand, his luminous eyes not stirring from the general's face; outside the hot stillness lay over the park and over the wide fields—where thousands of poppies stretched scarlet heads higher than the wheat; one heard the trampling of horses in the paved courtyard of the castle where the red-roofed stables stood, the distant voices of grooms; in the dim room there was no sound.

"One lived in those days, my children," the abrupt strong voice broke the quiet. "War is terrible, but after all one lives—if one is not killed at once. It happened so to many that day of Ratisbon; many were killed that day." The deep voice stopped, then went on again. "The Austrians held Ratisbon and the bridge across the Danube River. The Emperor wished to take the town and that bridge. Marshal Lannes was ordered to do it. You see, my children, the walls were very old but filled with Austrian artillery, and there was infantry on the parapets. An old ditch lay under the walls, a large ditch, dry, but twenty feet high and fifty feet wide. All the bottom of it was a vegetable garden.

To take that town it was necessary to go down into that ditch and climb up again to the walls, and all the time one would be under fire from the Austrians on the walls—do you understand that, children? Very well. Twice the marshal asked for fifty volunteers to take the ladders and place them in the ditch. Twice one hundred men sprang forward, and it was necessary to choose the fifty. Twice they dashed out, carrying the ladders, from behind the great stone barn which had covered them, and each time the detail was wiped out—fifty men wiped out. It was like that, my children, the fight at Ratisbon." The brown curl lay unstirred against the dark coat; the shining eyes of the boy held, as if fastened there, to the face of the story-teller. Into the silence came a choking sigh.

"The Emperor!" François breathed—"the Emperor was there!"

Probably nothing, which had not to do with his daughter, could have touched General Gourgaud as did that tribute. That it was a tribute to his story meant much, but the worship of Napoleon which burst out in the gasp went deeper. The followers of the Corsican never asked for a reason why they adored him; it was a feeling blinder and stronger than love which he inspired, and it lasted in the

hearts of his soldiers to the latest moment of the longest life. The veteran officer who felt this possession of his own being saw it mirrored in the slim lad who quivered before him, and he loved the lad for it.

"*Sapristi!*" he growled. "The arm of the Little Corporal reaches a long way. The child has not even seen him, and *voilà*, he loves him."

The child's face flushed. "But yes, my Seigneur," François spoke quickly. "But yes. I have seen the Emperor."

"You have seen Napoleon?" The general was surprised. "How is that?"

In a boyish fashion, in homely language of his class, yet with that dramatic instinct which is characteristically French, François told his tale as his grandmother had told it to him and to his brothers and sisters—the tale which the children called "Napoleon Comes". The general listened with a sincere interest. As simple in many ways as the child, every least word of his demigod Napoleon was charged for him with authority. He considered deeply when the story was finished.

"My boy," he addressed the lad, "I do not know the law—I am a soldier. Yet by my idea you are Chevalier, created so by the act of the most power-

ful monarch who ever ruled France—by our Emperor Napoleon. Another monarch sits now on his throne, yet he was in truth France's ruler when he gave that blow on the shoulder which made you a knight; he had the right of an emperor—therefore you are that which he made you—the Chevalier François Beaupré. As for the rest"—his brows drew into a bushy line and his eyes gleamed like swords—"do not forget that he himself charged you with a duty to his house; your fate and his name are linked. The time may come when, as the Emperor said, you may be a Marshal of France under another Bonaparte. But that is a small thing if the time comes when you may help another Bonaparte to come to his right, to rule over France. It is that of which you must think till the hour strikes, and then it is that which you must give your life for."

Little François, the visionary, the hero worshiper, trembled. He had no words to answer the orders leveled at him in those rolling tones. "I will do it, my Seigneur," he said, frightened yet inspired, lifted into a tremendous dizzying atmosphere. And with that a secret which he had told no one, not even his mother, broke forth. "My Seigneur, a strange thing happens sometimes—I have

dreams—yet they are not dreams—in broad daylight. I see things—I hear voices—which are not of our village. Three times I saw a long road up a mountain, and over the mountain was a large star. I saw it three times, and once a voice said 'It is the star of the Bonapartes, but also your star, François. Follow it.' "

The general was a hard-headed person for all his cult of Napoleon, and vision-seeing appeared to him nonsense. He pooh-poohed at once the idea of a star divided between the house of Bonaparte and a small peasant. "Your mother had better put a wet cloth in your cap," he advised. *"Parbleu*—seeing stars in midday! Some one-legged old fighter has been gabbling before you about the star of the Bonapartes, and that and a touch of sunstroke in this heat, it may be, have turned you silly. Let me hear no more of stars, but keep at your lesson and learn to be—"

With that he was aware that the boy did not hear him. The light figure was on tiptoes—the large eyes stared at the wall, and the child spoke in an uninflected voice as if something muffled spoke through him.

"I see the star," he said. "I see it through a window where there are iron bars . . . Ah!" The interjection was in the boy's natural accent, and he

shivered violently. "Ugh!" His teeth chattered and he looked about vaguely. "It is like an ice-house. I do not like those dreams; they make me so cold. Seigneur, it is late; my mother will not be pleased. And I must stop at the garden and pick the vegetables for supper—carrots and peas. I must hurry to get the peas and carrots."

Little Alixe, clutching her father's thumb, watched as the boy disappeared. Then, to the general's astonishment, she began to sob. "I—I don't know," she answered his quick question. "But I—I think it is because I am sorry the little boy was so cold."

CHAPTER VI

A GAME OF CARDS

HIDDEN in the mechanism of character are springs unsuspected by one's nearest, unknown to one's self, which the habits of every day keep polished and oiled, ready for action. Many times the psychological moment for their use does not arrive, and a life ends with no outside history but commonplace; sometimes in the midst of commonplace the touch falls on the electric button, the coiled wire is sprung, and an ordinary career rises unexpectedly to heroism, or falls as unexpectedly by temptation. It is the habit of years which has prepared the one crisis or the other.

François Beaupré—Le François of Vicques—sober, laborious, had in him a certain pig-headedness, and also a vein of the gambler which had swollen with use; yet because it had so far brought him only good luck the neighbors called this good judgment. He was a dealer in working oxen; he bought and raised and sold them, and only his wife knew what

chances he often took in buying young beeves. It was a simple solid form of speculation, yet it was that. It had given him the custom of taking chances and of confidence in his "luck",—all of which is perhaps no bad thing, yet it prepared a bad thing for François Beaupré. Up to this time he had been fortunate to a miracle and his bargains were so lucky that he stood highest among his neighbors for keenness and for caution. His house was the largest, his table the most generous, his wife the best-dressed of the village; he planned to give his children, particularly young François, who was more than a common student, opportunities. François should go to the college at Delesmontes. No other man in the place was so comfortable, and because of his genial and simple soul he was not envied. Le François was a popular person, and it was a pride to the village that his name and his prosperity were known about the countryside.

On a day in September he left Vicques early in the morning to drive to the market in Delesmontes, a league distant, two pairs of oxen which he had bought as calves for almost nothing from poor stock out of a farm leagues away. He had fed and trained and cared for them till now they were well set-up and powerful and smooth-working—ready to sell

for a good price. François kissed his wife and the baby, and called good-by to the children playing in the garden, and left the little place so full of hopeful life, with contentment in his heart. He planned, as he swung along the road whistling, what he would do with the money which he would bring back—eight hundred francs, he believed it would be. Not a clearer head or lighter heart passed that day along the Roman road to Delesmontes. At the market he found that there were few oxen to be disposed of, none which compared to his, and his ideas of value went up—he would get nine hundred francs for them, which delayed the sale. Eight hundred he might have had easily, but the other was a large price, even for the best. However, François was cheerful and obstinate and confident, and such qualities accomplish things—he got his price.

But it came to be, by the time his bargain was closed, three o'clock in the afternoon, and he had had no dinner. With the cattle off his hands and the money in his pocket he felt a sense of leisure and of wealth. Hungry as a wolf he felt also, and he turned into the inn of Delesmontes, where the sign of a huge bear, cut out of tin and painted black, swung before the door.

It was pleasant inside in the great clean hall of the inn, twenty feet wide by forty long. Bars of yellow afternoon sunlight patterned the white scrubbed floor; at the tables of black oak a number of men sat on benches, bottles and glasses before them, and pulled at their pipes, and the clouds of smoke rose to the dark wood ceiling, bluish already with much smoking; against the whitewashed walls hung engravings of battles framed in red cherry-wood. Doors and windows were open, and through them one saw harvest fields lying gold in sunlight. As François sat down he faced a window through which, down the slow slope from Delesmontes perching on the mountain, beyond a stretch of tranquil country, lifted, three miles away, a bunch of roofs, red-tiled and brown-shingled, and the red spire of a church with a newly-gilded ball—his village of Vicques. He sighed hungrily and happily. In half an hour, after a glass of wine and a little bread and meat, he would be on his way there with that comfortable purse of nine hundred francs in his pocket, eager to tell his good comrade and dear wife of the day's success.

He was alone at his table, but three or four men whom he knew slightly nodded with friendliness across the room; he was a man who inspired friend-

liness. In the big hall, in all Delesmontes, in all the country was no one happier or more satisfied with life than François Beaupré when he entered the Inn of the Bear at three o'clock on that sunshiny afternoon of September the eighth. Before six he rose up to leave it a man ruined and broken-hearted.

A waitress approached him—a *sommellière*—trim in her short calico skirt and white apron, her hair done in the picturesque fashion of the place—braided and turned around the head in the back, in the front parted and laid in two great puffs with a wide blue ribbon between to hold it. The girl took his order; as she turned to go a man just coming in knocked against her, and apologizing with many words, caught sight of François.

"Good day!" he saluted him heartily. "Good day, Monsieur Beaupré," and François, friendly always, answered "Good day," but with a reserve, for he did not recall the man. "You don't remember me? That is natural, for we met but once. Yet I have not forgotten you. It was at the house of my cousin, Paul Noirjean of Devillier—he who also deals in oxen, though not so fortunately as you, perhaps. We met there. I saw you only a few minutes, but I have not forgotten you, and my

cousin also speaks very often of François Beaupré. He has a great opinion of your judgment."

Now Paul Noirjean was an old acquaintance and a solid man, and though Beaupré did not see him often, living six leagues away, he respected him highly. A cousin of his was to be considered, and François was embarrassed that his memory could not focus on the meeting. He tried to cover this with cordiality, and invited the stranger to share his meal.

"Not at all, not at all," the other answered. "Yet we must have a bottle of wine together, but it shall be my bottle."

François objected; the man insisted. At length: "See, we will play cards for that bottle," the unknown man suggested, and the cards were brought, and a game of *La rams*—euchre—was in progress in two minutes.

Meanwhile the wine had come, and François, a touch more generous and more cordial for it, was genially sorry when he won and the stranger must pay.

"*Tiens!* We will play again for another bottle," he announced with a bit of swagger. He was conscious of a right to spend silver in treating his friends, with that fat purse in his pocket.

"No," spoke the stranger—Duplessis, he had said his name was. "No. I have drunk enough. However, if you feel sensitive at taking the small sum of money at my hands—it is a good game—*La rams*—let us play for the franc which the bottle would cost. *Eh bien!*"

François certainly could not refuse that; they played, and again he gained. Again they played, this time doubling the amount, and again François gained, and again and again, till he felt ashamed in carrying away all this money of a new acquaintance, and at the same time a cock-sureness that so lucky a devil as Beaupré might well lose a little and stop at the right amount. He insisted that the game should go on. More wine had been brought. The excitement of cards and excitement of wine met in a heady mixture; Duplessis drank little, though François urged it on him. The luck began to change; now and then the stranger won, now and then Beaupré, yet more often now the stranger, till at length François was playing not with the desire to lose, but with a hope to gain back something at least of the considerable sum which he had lost. Before this he had gone into his pocket and brought out that honorable nine hundred francs, and had thrown one louis d'or after another on the black table, and

lost one after another. Yet his confidence was still strong—luck would turn—this was his lucky day. And now he would not regret carrying away the stranger's money. He began to feel a fierce eagerness to get the better of this antagonist become so formidable. And a horrible nervousness was creeping over him at the dim vision of a thought—a thought kept resolutely on the confines of his consciousness, yet persistently pushing forward—the thought that it might be that he could not win the money back.

With eyes excited and bright on the table, with fingers snapping out the cards boldly, that thought shook him suddenly—he jeered at it and despised it. It was absurd, grotesque. He was François Beaupré, a rich peasant, a respected and well-known citizen; moreover, of good judgment; and moreover still, lucky. He had been lucky all his life; always things had turned his way; the trick was not going to fail him now.

"Double!" he shouted promptly as he lost again.

And he lost again. The nine hundred francs were gone; he gave a note now, on his stock, and again he lost. A deathly sickening sensation had gripped him and was holding him; the horrid thought had come close and was looking him in the face; he

seemed to feel an appalling hot breath from it. He tossed off another glass of wine and for a moment was dumb. Then in a flash he saw what he must do; this was of course the last point before the luck turned—that was evident. It would make a fine tale how Le François had come within one of losing all he owned, but even then his courage had not failed him. He had drunk off his wine at that crucial moment and called "Double!" once more in a stout voice, and played—and won. Won back all he had lost and more—so the tale would run.

And so François set down the glass empty, and for the last time cried the fatal word—"Double!"

In silence, with a crowd of silent men, who in some way had come to know what was happening, standing about them, the two played the last round. And François lost.

In silence he signed the note which gave to the stranger his house and furniture and land, all that he had in the world, and stood up and looked about at the faces gathered as if astonished. A long second he looked at them; then he bent and stared from the low open window which faced him, and the men, following his eyes, saw with a manner of shock that they were focused on the distant village of Vicques and on the church standing separated at one

end of it, and on the house next, his home. With that he stood straight, and fell through the crowd without a word, and out of the doorway, and plunged forward with strides which lurched drunkenly. But he was not drunk.

CHAPTER VII

WORK AND HOPE

THE next day a sheriff and his clerk came and fixed red seals to the house and to everything in it which locked, and Claire watched in a deep quiet, the baby in her arms. The children watched too, awed, but yet pleased, as it is with children, to be part of an event. Tomas bragged openly to Alphonse Villeneuve.

"You have no affairs at your house," he observed. "At our house all the neighbors are crying, and there is a very fine man, the sheriff, who puts red things on the table drawers and on my father's desk. It is amusing to have affairs."

It came as a surprise to such honest pride to receive at this moment a blow on the ear from his older brother. "Blockhead," François said, "do you not understand that we are losing our home? Is that amusing?"

The brown eyes of François were burning like coals as he stalked away from Tomas—quiet for

once—like a tragedy hero. On his shoulders, it seemed, was the weight of the world, and he could not, as he longed to, carry it. He, being the oldest son, should, according to his code of eleven years, take up his nightmare which had turned his gay capable father into a crushed heap sitting there at the table of the great room, and his happy calm-eyed mother into a haggard statue of a woman. He ought to lift it from them and throw it far away by some heroic effort, but he did not know how to begin. The sheriff seemed as sorry as any one; it was of no use to attack the sheriff, which he had considered. And that evil spirit, that man who had taken their happiness in an afternoon, Duplessis, kept far away. His heart swollen with affection and aching for action, François stood about uselessly. In him grew a resolve that he would give up all that he had hoped for, the normal school at Delesmontes, the college after, everything, to work and win back the lost home for his people.

Something had been said already of sending the children to this or that uncle or aunt—there would in a short time be no home and no living for them until the broken father could gather himself and begin again. Little François resolved that he would not go. He would stay with his father and prove

that eleven was not too young to make money. As he stood watching the sheriff who moved gloomily about his unwelcome duty he was aware of a horse's hoofs beating down the road, and he turned. In the midst of his grief it was interesting to see the Baron-General Gourgaud coming, on his bay mare Lisette. The general drew up beside him and looked at him sternly.

"Where is your father?" he shot at him, and threw a leg over and vaulted off and flung the mare's reins to the lad, and swung into the great entry and through the open door into the cottage.

François, though broken-hearted, was but eleven, and it was a proud thing to hold the seigneur's horse and pleasant to see the spirited beast paw the earth as he held her. He was so entranced with this occupation that he forgot his bruised life and his lost career entirely. For fifteen minutes he forgot, and the other children gathered around him, and he ordered them away from the horse and felt himself its guardian and an important person, with complete satisfaction.

And at that, out of the house came the seigneur, big and black-browed and solid of tread, and with him that broken-hearted father whose face recalled all the tragedy.

"François," his father spoke, more gently than ever he had spoken before, "I have taken your future from you, my son. The seigneur wishes to give it back. He wishes to make you his child. Your mother consents—and I—I consent." His father's arm was about his neck. The general's abrupt voice took up the statement.

"Will you come and live with me in the château, Monsieur the Marshal?" he demanded roughly, kindly. "I will treat you as a son—you shall learn to ride a horse and shoot a gun and be a soldier. You shall fit yourself for the part which we know must be played one day. Will you come?"

François, staring up with his great eyes stretched, was dumb. Just now all that he had hoped for in life had been snatched from him; more than he had dreamed was now offered in a turn of the hand. For a moment it seemed that heaven had opened and a miracle of joy come down; then it flashed to his mind that this dazzling gift had a price. He felt the touch of his father, the ruined sorrowful father; he saw in the shadow of the entry his mother who listened; in a flood he remembered their lifelong love and his resolutions of five minutes ago—the hard life of labor and saving which he had planned for himself. There is no half-way with a child.

With a whole soul François cast away the brilliant dream and hardly felt an effort.

"I thank you a thousand times, my Seigneur," he answered with decision. "I can not go with you. I must stay and work for my father and my mother."

There was silence for a minute in the sunshiny garden; the children had wandered away; the men did not speak; one heard only the mare Lisette whom François held, who stamped her light fore-foot and whinnied impatiently. Then the general's grave voice sounded, more gravely than ever.

"François Beaupré, you own a fine lad," he threw at the drooping peasant. "I would like to have him for mine. Since I can not, I shall try at least to be his friend. Monsieur the Marshal, it must be as you say. But come to see me at the château soon. I shall have things to talk over with you."

Little François, absorbed in admiration of the easy way in which the seigneur threw a leg across the restless Lisette, wishing desperately that he might learn to ride such a horse, was disconcerted, as the dancing brown feet cantered away, to feel his father's arms holding him suddenly, closely, and a wetness on his cheek.

"Why are you crying, my father?" he asked wondering.

Three weeks later, of all the seven children only François and the baby were left with their father and mother. The others were portioned out, one here, two there, among charitable uncles and aunts until the time should come, if ever, when Le François should prosper enough again to care for them all. He had rented a small cottage at the other end of the village, and Claire, in happy times a quiet woman of few words, had suddenly acquired pronounced gaiety. The little feet of her seemed always moving about the poor place and she sang at her work, which was a new habit.

"How can you?" the elder François asked one day, and she explained to him.

"A house without brightness might as well not be. In the other time you were cheerful always—at present you can not be, so I do it for you. With hope and work everything will come right again, and I dare not stop hoping or working. I dare not let grief take hold of me, for it would choke me. We have two children, and we shall get back the rest. Do not look backward, my François, where

there was joy, but forward, where there will be joy."

And big François brought down his fist with a bang on the table. "It is the right stuff that is in you. It is the women who are brave. I will be like a woman if I may! I will stop this whining and live like you, whom I have ruined."

And he did it. So it happened that the memory of little François held only pleasant pictures of those days of sudden poverty; recollections of a bare little place which shaped swiftly to attractiveness, of comradeship with his father in the business of money-getting; of deep satisfaction at feeling himself a factor in the growing hoard, and, above all, a recollection of that exquisite gaiety of his mother which had no likeness to resignation or duty, but rang with the unselfishness of love. Moreover, the hard labor to which he had sentenced himself came in an unexpected and delightful shape.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RETREAT FROM MOSCOW

ON a morning François was busy at the new garden, digging beds for the plants which the neighbors had eagerly given them, and which, put in the ground now, in the autumn, would rise above them in brightness next spring. He heard the dishes clatter as his mother inside set the table for their bare dinner; he smelled the soup cooking; he heard his mother sing as she moved about; he lifted his head and saw her through the open window, in a bar of misty sunshine. The world seemed bright; surely when there is sunshine and the smell of good earth and the smell of good food, when one's mother sings—then the world is bright. François fell to whistling *A l'école du Roi,* the old chanson which his mother sang.

Into this contentment came, galloping gloriously, hoof beats of a horse. The busy spade, several sizes too big, stopped, and François leaned his chin on the handle, the boy out of drawing for the tool.

He stood, like a quaint little old workman, watching to see the general pass, the general on that apotheosis of horse-flesh, Lisette. But the general stopped, which was a heavenly surprise to François each time that it happened.

"Good morning, Marshal. How goes the fighting? The colonel, your father, is in the field, is he not? Will you ask the lieutenant-colonel, your mother, if I may speak to her?"

And the general, flinging titles about him, sprang to the ground. "All marshals to stay inside," he shouted after the boy. "Council of war excluding field-officers above generals."

"Mother, mother, the seigneur wishes you," François whispered piercingly, but Claire was already on the little front walk by the new garden.

In a moment she stood at the gate in her fresh calico dress, with a white fichu over her head, and the big man towered and growled sentences friendlily. François, obedient in the cottage, gazed earnestly from the window out of earshot, incurious, admiring. Long years after he remembered the picture: the little boy, whose life was being settled, gazing from the humble house at the old soldier who opened a door for that small life into large possibilities; and the mother who loved him and saw the

first step for her boy on a ladder that mounted above her.

Then the general trotted with jingling stirrup down the village street and Claire stood with eyes following for a moment. When she turned she was smiling yet, but François vaguely wondered at the movement which twisted her mouth for a second as she looked at him. She put her arm around his neck and kissed him, which was pleasant but seemed unpractical.

"What did the seigneur say, my mother?" he demanded, struggling away. "Did he say I might come to the château to-morrow? May I? Am I to know what the general said, my mother?"

For he considered the seigneur his property; he was a bit injured at being excluded from the council of war, he, the Marshal.

After his father came home to dinner he knew. He was to go each morning to the château and do work in copying for the general. The general was writing a book, nothing less than a history of Napoleon himself. The boy's great dreamy eyes glowed. What luck to help in such a glory! How glad he was that he wrote fastest and most accurately of all the boys in school! And the general was to pay him six francs a week—it was dazzling!

That would make the hoard mount beyond anything he had dared to hope. That would be a real help to his mother and to his father—"Is it not, my father?"

And the father said yes, proudly. And neither mother nor father suggested that there was even more to this great future.

So the little lad, in his clean, patched, peasant clothes, went up to the château the next morning serious and important, and was given a table and a corner in the library and words to copy which thrilled his soul. For the very first was about the battle of Austerlitz and the sunshine and the frozen river; it seemed a fate big enough for any life to sit there in the quiet book-lined room and write out such things direct from a man who had seen them.

It came to be the spring of the year, and day after day François trod the path down the village street past his old home, which he resolutely looked away from, and across the arch of the old Roman bridge. From there he glanced up always to see the first broad view of the red castled roof with the gray towers below, vague through the trees. There were nuts by the thousand in the stately beech woods of the castled park, but François was too busy a man to stop for nuts in the mornings. Straight on he

marched to the little side door, and there Jean Phillippe Moison, the son of Jean Phillippe Moison of Delesmontes, now a footman at the château and the wearer of very beautiful purple and gold clothes, opened the door and let him in.

Day after day, week after week he labored with all his might at the piles of manuscript; when it was a question of battle, murder and sudden death he was a happy boy, and also he sometimes made mistakes for joy of the story; but when descriptions of the Emperor's policy came, and lists of provisions and such things, then, naturally, one was at times tired. Yet the work followed the bent of his inclination, for all that concerned war and soldiers concerned this lad of twelve. World after world opened before him as he worked in the big room at his table, set into the window slitted into the deep gray wall. A bookcase stood out at the angle there; one would hardly see the still little figure, the thin ankles twisted about the rounds of the high chair, the slim shoulders bent over the sheets of writing. Often the general talked to him.

"*Eh bien,* there, the Marshal!" would come thundering from the great table across the room; and the scribe would drop his pen and scuttle over the dim wide place.

"Yes, Monsieur the Seigneur. I am here."

"Listen then, my soldier. I am uncertain if this that I have written is of importance. It is interesting to me, because Gaspard Gourgaud was there, yet I do not wish to ram Gaspard Gourgaud down a reader's throat. So listen, you marmot, as an officer of rank, and as a literary critic, and say truthfully if you find it interesting."

François squatted on a stool exactly in front of the general, with his knees together and his elbows on them, his chin in the hollow of his hands. His eyes were glued on the general's face. In a deep voice the general read. It was an account of that world-tragedy, the retreat from Moscow. First came a list of regiments and of officers, with detailed accounts of early service in both; it was exact, accurate. For five minutes the general read this; then his black eyebrows lifted and he glared over the paper.

"You find it interesting?" he demanded.

François, lips compressed, shook his head firmly. "No, my Seigneur. Not at all." And the general's gaze concentrated fiercely on the humble patch of brown homespun. The boy's great eyes met his calmly.

"I agree with you," the general said, and sorted

the papers over and laid some away. "You are an uncommon critic," he went on. "You speak the truth. It is what I want." Selecting a sheet or two, he began to read again.

"Over the frozen roads the worn army still trudged; every form of misery trudged with them. Hunger was there, and cold, and suffering of wounds, and suffering of lack of clothing; more than this, there was the constant dread of attack from flying bands of Cossacks. From time to time frightful explosions made one turn one's head—it was the caissons exploded by order of the Emperor that they might no longer encumber us. The snow fell. The low-hanging sky was heavy with more snow-clouds; often a wind cut to our ill-covered bones; the road was sleety; the worn shoes of the emaciated horses slipped on the frozen ground; the soldiers put their shoulders to the wheels to help their horses."

Through the reverberating tones of the old soldier cut a child's sigh. The bushy eyebrows arched and a glance shot over the paper at the tense small figure. The voice went on.

"The Emperor marched on foot with us. Staff in hand, wrapped in a large loose cloak, a furred Russian cap on his head, he walked in the midst of

his household, encouraging with a word, with a smile, every one who came near him. At night he slept often in a cabin without doors or windows, his rough bed screened with difficulty; he shared our sorrows, our Little Corporal, our Emperor. He was pale, but calm as always, for his face never showed his mind. Over frozen roads of Russia, strewn with the men and horses who were killed by fatigue and famine, day after day Napoleon walked with his army."

There was no sound now, but the general, glancing up again, met eyes so on fire that he was disconcerted and lost his place. In a moment he had found it again.

"There were many adventures which showed the souls of men shining through the nightmare of this horrible time. Many noble deeds were done, many heartbreaking ones. One which was both happened to me. There was an Italian officer in the corps under Prince Eugene, who had been my comrade when I was on the staff of Lannes; his name was Zappi—the Marquis Zappi. On the day after the dreadful passing of the Beresina River, I suddenly felt my strength go—I could walk no longer. The horrors of the day before had capped the long stretch of privation; like thousands of others, I

must drop out and die. I looked at the piles of snow by the trampled roadside, at the gray sky over me—on that frozen bed, under that pitiless roof, I must lie down. A sick loathing seized me, and I groaned and dragged my heavy feet forward, to stay with my friends even a few steps more. And with that an arm was around me suddenly, and I heard Zappi's quiet voice.

" 'Keep up your courage, comrade; we are going to see our homes yet,' he said. 'I shall take care of you. Look'—and I looked, and he had a sledge with fur robes on it. I never knew where he got it—from some deserted Russian house, I suppose. He put me on the sledge and wrapped me in the furs and gave me brandy from his flask. For Zappi had done a clever thing. He had made a bargain with some Jesuits near Polotsk, where he had camped for a while, that his men should cut and beat the wheat necessary on condition that he should have a part of the brandy for them. He had kept some of his share yet, and it saved my life that day, the brandy of the monks of Polotsk.

"So Zappi drew me, weak and helpless, on the sledge for days, and cared for me like a baby, and brought me back to comparative strength. One would believe that after such kindness I would

gladly have given my life for my friend; instead of that I tried to take his life."

The shock that caught the little figure down on the stool arrested the general's deep voice. He lowered the paper and glared. "But wait, Monsieur the Marshal; wait till you hear the story; don't condemn a man unheard," he interjected. The reading went on.

"There was a thick fog on that day, and out of it, and out of the wood we must pass, rushed with wild cries a cloud of mounted Cossacks across the road within twenty paces of the Emperor himself. But General Rapp dashed forward at the head of two mounted squadrons of chasseurs and grenadiers of the guard who always followed the Emperor, and the Cossacks were put to flight. I was in the charge; I was serving temporarily in the place of one of Rapp's officers, because, on account of my late weakness, it was thought well that I should be on horseback. So it happened that, as the skirmish finished, I saw coming toward me a figure in a furred coat and cap, brandishing a Cossack lance—rushing toward the Emperor. I dashed down on the mad Cossack, as I thought him, and passed my great saber through his body. And the man fell, and as he fell the fur cap went off and he groaned

and looked up at me with dying eyes—it was Zappi."

"Ah!" The little figure had sprung up and stood, fists clenched, threatening. One would have thought it was this second that the general had sabered Zappi.

"May I live a moment?" the general inquired. "Till I explain. Zappi did not die."

"Ah!" again. And François sank relieved on the stool, yet with stern eyes still on the general's face. The general laid the papers aside.

"Not he. He had seized the lance from a Russian whom he had killed—it was most imprudent, especially in the dress he wore, which did not show the French uniform underneath. It was my turn then to play nurse. He was placed in one of the carriages of the Emperor, and I cared for him as my own brother, and he came through it all, and went back to Italy, to his home."

The general's deep-set eyes were gazing now above François' head out through the narrow window where the boy's table stood, across the mountain slope, to the blue distance.

"Alessandro, my friend," he spoke in his gruff tones, yet softly, "shall we see each other again? So close through that black time, so far apart now

in the peace of our homes! Those warm hands which cared for me when I was freezing and dying in Russia—I shall touch them perhaps never again, never again!"

François, forgotten in the general's very French access of emotion, squatted in front of him and regarded him in a practical peasant fashion. With that he spoke, businesslike, fatherly.

"One should not say that word never, my Seigneur," he remarked. "One should believe that the good thing will happen, and if the good God thinks best it will happen. Besides that, if one believes a thing to be true, it is all the same as if it were true."

The general, brought to the right-about by this firmness, looked down with an enormous frown. "Ha! A wise little old Marshal! It is lucky for me that I have such to superintend me. How came you to know these great thoughts, Monsieur?"

"It is my mother who says that," François answered, undisturbed by the sarcasm. "So, my Seigneur, because my mother says it, I know it to be the truth."

"Ha!" exploded the general again, and then, reflectively: "It is a simple and inexpensive philosophy—on the whole there might be worse."

CHAPTER IX

THE CROWN OF FRIENDSHIP

IN a claw-footed, carved, old, mahogany desk of a Virginia house, in a drawer where are packets of yellowed letters tied up and labeled, is a letter written years later, referring to that earlier time in France. Perhaps this bit of the chronicle of François Beaupré could not be told so vividly as in these words of François written from his prison. He begins with the account of an adventure, of a ride for life.

"So, dear Alixe," he finishes this—the detailed story of his capture—"down went the poor horse, and over his head I spun into the ditch with a bump on the skull which dazed me. And when I came to there were the heavy Austrians around me, gaping to see the Prince. And only François Beaupré to see, which they found out pretty promptly, as I have told you before, and also how I defied them. But it was a good ride; I felt that all through the mad rush, and if you will believe me, Alixe, as I

rode fast from my enemies that morning, with more than my own life depending on the legs of the landlord's horse, I was thinking most, not of the Prince, nor yet of the death or prison which awaited me, but all the time of those rides on Coq in the park of the château of Vicques, when you and I went by turns over his lively head, and the seigneur stood by and laughed.

"You remember those rides? I have no need to ask you, but it pleases me to say 'do you remember' —it takes me out of this dark place into the beech wood with its air and lights and shadows. Away back it takes me, to that first morning when Coq came and work was not even considered for the whole day, and you and the seigneur and the two grooms—Jules I remember, I have forgotten the other's name; but I know well how he looked—and I, François, spent the morning in the park, and you and I by turns learned to ride Coq. You were good at it from the first, and I—I was not bad. *N'est-ce pas,* Alixe? None the less Coq put each of us over his head several times—and how the seigneur shouted a big laugh each time! He treated you like a boy always, and you learned so the good things that few girls know—to throw a ball and climb and run, to be courageous and laugh when hurt. You

were the best playmate in the world, Alixe, and it is François Beaupré, the leader of the village for play, who says it. That game of all games, riding, we learned together and took the hard knocks equally. Many times I have thanked the seigneur for many things, but never so much, I believe, as I thanked him that morning with the Austrians closing on me for having made me a horseman—because that saved the Prince.

"In a great danger they say one thinks more clearly than usual—one's mind works with smoothness and at leisure. It was so during that ride, for I followed out as I dashed along, hearing the shouts of the men back of me, the whole train of circumstances from one of those mornings with Coq in the park, to this adventure of life and death. It was the morning—you will know before I say it—when Jean Phillippe Moison, in his lovely purple clothes, came mincing down the graveled drive, as if afraid of spoiling his good shoes—and I think he was—to the seigneur, who taught us to ride Coq. Do you remember how your father thundered at him?

"'A strange monsieur to see me? Impossible! I am engaged. Tell him I will not see him.'

"And Jean Phillippe smiling, for all of them understood the seigneur, and saying gently, 'Yes, my

Seigneur,' turned away with the message. And your father shouted after him:

"'Stop! Come back there! What do you mean by that? Bring the monsieur to me.' And the purple clothes disappeared and appeared again in a few minutes gleaming in the sun against the gray old walls—I can see it all now, Alixe—like a large violet blossom of a strange flower. And behind Jean Phillippe was a tall man in a long traveling cloak, and behind him a tall little boy. And as they came the seigneur turned to go to meet them, and stopped and stared. And the monsieur in the cloak stopped and stared; and you, mounted on Coq, and I, holding Coq's bridle, watched curiously, because of the other child, and we saw how the seigneur suddenly began to shake as if ill, and then with a hoarse shout rushed to the tall man and threw his arms about him and held him, and sobbed aloud. That was a strange thing to see the seigneur do, and I never forgot it. And to think that the child who stood there, shy and unknown, was Pietro! It seems unreasonable that ever there was a time when you and Pietro and I did not know one another well.

"As I rode that day, with the Austrians after me, I thought out the whole chain of events; how Pietro had come and had stayed while his father,

the marquis, went to America, and had fitted into our life and become dear to us, the big, beautiful, silent lad. And how then, because of the death of the marquis, Pietro had come under the charge of your father, the seigneur, and how he and I went away together to the military school, always more and more like brothers and—all the rest. I need not recite those things to you, yet I like to do it. My thoughts, in that wild dangerous moment, seemed to go in detail through all, from the morning that the Marquis Zappi arrived with his little son at the château, through the ten years of our life together, to my coming into Italy as his secretary—and from that, by a rapid step, to this castle prison."

The rest of the letter belongs to a later part of the story. That little Pietro Zappi should be led into the narrative by the hand of his closest friend was the object for which the letter was introduced, and, that accomplished, the course of history bends back to the quiet Valley Delesmontes and the children growing up under the shadow of the castle towers.

The general, sitting in his library the morning after the arrival chronicled in the quoted letter, stared at his old friend from under his heavy brows as if trying vigorously to convince himself of his presence. The marquis, an Italian of North Italy,

tall and proud and quiet, had the air more of a student than of a soldier. A little the air, also, of an invalid, for he stooped and walked languidly, and a cough caught him at times. He was talking, on that morning in the library, while the general listened; it was not the usual order of things. Work on the book had been given over; the young secretary had been ordered out to play, and outside, through the open window, one heard the children's voices in shouts and laughter. Alixe and François were teaching Pietro to ride Coq. The marquis turned his head toward the window a little as the sounds of gaiety floated in, and smiled gently, and the general frowned ferociously, which meant the same thing.

"So you see, Gaspard," the marquis went on in his quiet reticent way, "that I have believed in our old friendship. I have taken for granted a welcome for my boy—I could not have done it with another man. The voyage to America and my stay there will last, it may be a year. I can not take the boy with me—he is too young to travel as I must. His brother died two years ago, his mother is just dead; he is lonely; I could not leave him in Castelforte alone with servants. So I thought of my old friend Gaspard Gourgaud and of what we had suf-

fered together, and how suffering binds people; and I thought of words you said once, Gaspard, that if a time should come when I needed you, no matter when or how, you would be ready. So—though I know that men in general forget and live in the present, and fret to be recalled to dead friendships—yet I dared to believe you were different. I have brought Pietro to leave him with you if you will have him, while I go to America."

Nothing could have gone beyond the savageness of the general's face as his friend finished speaking. His eyes flashed fire, his eyebrows gathered into a line of bushy defiance, his mouth set grimly; he was a living threat of assault and battery. His voice came with a fierce rumble, well suited to his look. "If you had not done it, Alessandro," he growled, "if you had not trusted me, I—I—!" and with that the thunder-storm broke down.

This old officer of Napoleon had, after all his battles and killings, the simplicity and the heart of his own little girl. But he cleared his throat hurriedly with a bravado of carelessness, and before the marquis could do more than smile at him wistfully, he went on.

"It is all settled; there was no need of a word; Pietro is my son till you claim him from me, and

glad enough I am to get him for as long as I may. I have a lien on a very good manner of boy already, young François Beaupré, whom I wished to adopt, but the lad would not give up his parents. And that makes me more eager for another. They will play better together and work better together, and they will be a good brace of brothers for my Alixe."

"Your Alixe," the marquis spoke reflectively. "She is a charming person, that little woman of yours."

Again the general looked as if in a terrific rage. "She is the best thing that lives," he announced, and suddenly smiled. "Alessandro, shall I tell you what flashed into my head before you and Pietro had been here an hour?"

"What then?"

"I saw the children—your boy and my girl—together as if lifelong playmates over the big books in the window-seat there, and it came to me that it would be a joy to crown one's life if—later on—" He stopped and gazed inquiringly at the calm eyes which met his.

"Yes," the marquis answered quietly. "It would be that—the crown of our friendship, if some day they might love each other."

And with that the general gave a great shout of

laughter and leaned forward and seized his friend's hand in a bear's grip.

"It is unbelievable—it is heaven—it is a dream come true that you are here, Alessandro. And here we sit, after all these years, we old soldiers of Napoleon, and instead of talking of campaigns and battles, we plot a marriage like grandmothers. A marriage! Listen to those babies shouting outside over the pony! Such thoughts are far enough from them—*sapristi!* And there is indeed plenty of time; they are only babies yet." His voice stopped, but his eyes lingered on the face of the other as if he could not look enough to convince himself of its reality. "Tell me about your journey, Alessandro, as you promised, and why you should go that unheard-of distance, to that vague, just possible country, America, to get land."

So the marquis, sitting in the French castle, with the Jura Mountains standing far off as he lifted his eyes, with the summer wind blowing in at the window and the children's voices calling to each other outside, told at length a story of negotiations, of business arrangements, of a tract of land not yet seen which was to become one day of vital importance to those careless children who played. He told, what the general partly knew, how many fol-

lowers of the Emperor, including his brother Jerome Bonaparte, had bought tracts of land under that new government, the United States, and how several of them had gone out to this land, taking many things with them and looking to live there as in France in seigneurial dignity. How, through one of the Bonapartist émigrés and through his connections in America, Zappi had been offered a chance to buy five thousand acres in the state of Virginia; how he had considered the condition of Italy—that it was torn and worn with wars, that the Austrians were gaining in power, that his house was a marked one on the side of Italian liberty, and sure to be among the first to be punished if Austrian power were triumphant; that if such a time came it might mean everything to him or to his son to have a home and a domain beyond the reach of the tyrant's hand. For that reason he had thought it wise to cross the ocean and take possession of this land; and to do this quickly, because—the marquis stopped and looked at the general, and the general looked back fiercely.

"What then?" the latter demanded savagely. "It is well, of course, to do things at once, when one decides. But is there any hurry in particular for you, you hardened old veteran?"

The marquis smiled his gentle slow smile. "A little hurry for me, Gaspard," he answered. "The doctors tell me that my heart is not strong; a man dies suddenly of that trouble sometimes."

And the general, impatient, indignant, threw his arm around his friend's shoulder. "They know nothing, doctors," he growled. "You will outlive me. It is all villainy, such talk. Come, then, Alessandro, and see if Pietro can stick on Coq."

CHAPTER X

FOR ALWAYS

CLAIRE listened with serious calm eyes as her son told his story when he came home on the day of the new arrival at the castle. It was strange to have her boy the playmate of the children of a noble marquis and of the seigneur himself. A pang came with the thought, for it seemed to separate the little lad from her. But the grandmother had said always, and the mother believed it, that the child would not grow up and live and die placidly in Vicques as had his ancestors. There was a wider destiny before him; had not the hand of Napoleon himself laid that destiny on his baby shoulder? So, like plenty of other mothers, Claire put down the selfishness of a longing to keep her own child, and for the child's sake walked a little way with him on the road which was to lead him from her.

"The great gentleman has come who once saved our seigneur's life!" she repeated after François.

"And the seigneur is glad. Of course he is glad, my François. And you ought to be glad, too, and grateful to that gentleman because of all the good things our seigneur has done for you and which would not have happened, assuredly, if Monsieur the Marquis had not saved him. You should do everything that is possible for Monsieur the Marquis to show your gratitude."

François looked doubtful and a little depressed. "But, my mother, I can not do anything for the marquis that I can think of. He would not like me to bring him vegetables, I think. And Jean Phillippe or Pierre, or else the maids carry the water for him; I could not do that as I could for you. There are so many people to do things that he would not want me."

Claire considered; this view was true; yet she wished her son to feel his part of the obligation to the marquis and to discharge it. "It is true, François. Yet there may be something which you can do for him, if it be only to bring him a book gladly. Moreover, it is this which makes one's life happy —doing things for others. Watch and be ready to serve him with a good will when you may because of the thing which he did for our seigneur. Also be a friend to the young monsieur, his son—

you can do that, for you know well how to play and to help other boys in playing."

François nodded, and his exquisite smile, a smile whose sweetness and pathos and brilliancy went straight to the hearts of people, lighted his small face. "I will do that, mother. It will please me to do that."

Next morning the little brown figure which trudged through the beech wood was brightened by a large and vivid bouquet held in his two hands, a point of color among the swinging shadows, blossoms from the new garden, growing now as only Claire knew how to make things grow.

When the tap of François at the library door, where one heard men's voices talking, had brought the general's loud command of *"Entrez,"* the little brown figure and the large bunch of flowers came in together and the boy marched straight to the stately Italian. Snapping his heels together as his mother had taught him he made a stiff deep bow, and presented his nosegay. The marquis, a little astonished at this attention, received it with grave courtesy but without much cordiality; it seemed to him rather an odd whim of Gourgaud's to have this peasant child about as one of his own family. And the gift of the flowers appeared possibly a bit pre-

sumptuous. So that François' first effort at showing his appreciation of the marquis' heroism was not altogether successful.

But François did not know that; to him all the world was kindly, with different manners of kindliness. The manner of the marquis was graver than other people's, perhaps—what then? The kindliness was undoubtedly there below the gravity. And it was this monsieur who had saved the life of the seigneur; that, after all, was the whole matter. François wasted little time thinking of other people's feeling toward himself. He was much too busy with a joyful wonder of his own at the ever new goodness of his world. To the marquis, who hardly noticed him, he proceeded to constitute himself a shadow.

"We will walk to the village together, Alessandro," the general decided, of a morning, in his sudden way, and shouted forthwith for "Moison! Ho there, Moison! The cloak and hat of monsieur the marquis!"

But before Jean Phillippe had time to get to the door, the small person in homespun had fled like a rabbit and was back loaded with paraphernalia. He worked as faithfully as ever with the general at the great book, what times the general could spare now

to work, away from his friend; he played with his might as always, yet there were many times when he would squat at a distance behind the chair of the visitor, motionless, while Alixe and Pietro tried vainly to lure him away. At the first sign of a service to be done for the marquis he was up and at it; always quicker, always more intelligent than the footman. The marquis could not help seeing these attentions and went through two or three stages of feeling about it—bored, irritated, amused, flattered. The lad trotted at his heels as unobtrusively as a small dog and it was not in the marquis' nature—a gentle nature, if proud and reserved—to resist such determined devotion. So the little brown shadow made its way finally into his slow friendliness.

"You have thrown a charm over my boy François, Alessandro," the general said, well pleased. And the marquis answered thoughtfully:

"It is a boy out of the common, I believe, Gaspard. At first I thought it a mistake that you should raise a child of his class to the place you have given him, but I see that you understand what you are about. He is worthy of a good fate."

"I believe he is worthy of any fate," the general said, "and I believe he will make his fate if he has

a chance, a good one—perhaps a great one. He has uncommon stuff in him. I mean to give him his chance." And with that there was a conversation as to boys between the two friends.

The day came, after two months of such renewals of friendship when, on the next morning, the Marquis Zappi was due to start on his long journey to America. Out on the lawn, in the shadow of the beech trees he sat and watched his son playing ball with little Alixe. Then he was aware of François standing before him. The boy held something in his closed hand, and with that he opened his fingers and stretched it to the marquis. The marquis looked inquiringly at the yellow metal.

"What is this?" he asked; he was prepared now to be surprised by this boy about once in so often, so he simply suspended judgment at a thing unexpected.

"It is for you, Monsieur the Marquis." François smiled radiantly and continued to present the ten-franc piece.

The marquis, astounded, drew back with a shock of indignation. Was this peasant child offering him money? François went on happily, convinced that he was doing something worth while.

"But you may take it, Monsieur the Marquis; it

is indeed for you. It is my own; the seigneur gave it to me on my birthday, and my father did not put it with the savings, but said it was to be mine to do with as I chose. I choose to give it to you, Monsieur the Marquis. So that you may have plenty of money—I know well what it is not to have enough money. It is a bad thing. And it is convenient when on a journey—money." He nodded his head, as man to man. "So, as it is mine, I give this to you."

The brown fist was outstretched, the gold piece glittering in it, and still the marquis stared speechless. Never in his life had any one presumed to offer him money. He looked up at the face of the little peasant; it shone with peace and good will; he put out his hand and took the gold piece and looked at it a long minute, and drew a leather case from his pocket and placed it within carefully, and put it away.

"Thank you, François," said the marquis. And then he considered again the shining little face. "Why have you done this, François?" he asked. "Why do you always—do so much for me?"

"Monsieur the Marquis," François spoke eagerly, "it is not much I have done before, only little things. This, I know it, is much, for it is a large

sum of money and may be a great help to you. I am glad of that, Monsieur the Marquis." By now François was squatting cross-legged at the feet of the marquis. "I do it because you did that thing."

Then the marquis was entirely bewildered. "Did that thing? What do you mean, François?"

"That thing in Russia, for my seigneur. When you saved the life of my seigneur."

"Oh," said the marquis and stared down at the boy anxiously explaining.

"I have been afraid that I could never show you how I thanked you for the life of my seigneur. I am sorry that my seigneur sabered you afterward, but that was a mistake. Monsieur the Marquis, you understand that it was a mistake?"

"Quite," said Monsieur the Marquis.

"You have forgiven my seigneur?" François demanded.

"There was nothing to forgive, François. It was, as you point out, a mistake."

"Yes, Monsieur the Marquis." The heels of François came down on the sod with a whack of satisfaction as he sprang to his feet. "So it is all arranged. Only that even the gold is not enough. But I will do more. I will be a friend of Pietro. That will please you, will it not?"

The marquis was silent. "But I know that. It is a good thing to be friends—with me. Any boy in the village of Vicques would be glad to be my friend, you know, Monsieur the Marquis. So it will be a good thing for Pietro. He is six months younger than I; I can teach him how to climb and how to fight and how to take care of himself. And I will, because of that thing you did. Because, too, I think well of Pietro and besides because of your kindness to me."

"My kindness to you?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Marquis—because you have been so kind to me."

And the marquis, in the silence of his soul, was ashamed.

The next day he went. As they stood, gathered in the big carved doorway, he told them all good-by and lifted his boy and held him without a word. As he set him down he turned toward the carriage, but in a flash he turned back as if by a sudden inspiration, and laid a hand on little François' shoulder.

"You will remember that you promised to be a friend to Pietro, François?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Marquis," the child answered gravely.

The marquis caught Pietro's hand and put it into

François' and held the two little hands clasped so together in his own. "Always?" he demanded.

"Always," François repeated quietly, and those who heard the word spoken believed it.

CHAPTER XI

THE CASTLE CHILDREN

IMPERCEPTIBLY to the child, the life of François swept into a changing channel. More and more he belonged to the general, the castle; less and less, though he still lived with them and was faithful to them, did he belong to his father and mother and the village life. After a few months an event came which separated him from the old order sharply.

There was a farm in the Valley Delesmontes —five miles it was from Vicques—which was a dependence of the seigneury; for centuries the same family had held it, and it was considered the richest holding for a peasant in that part of the world. Just now the family all at once came to an end. It was necessary to find new tenants, and the general offered the place to Le François and La Claire. Even in their best days they had not been so prosperous as this would make them. It was a large farm of four

hundred acres, with a big house, with gardens and farm buildings and many horses and cattle—a rich great place for them and for their children. There could be no question as to accepting the offer. They could have their family together once more and give them advantages beyond what had ever been planned; it was a new start in life. And Le François, having learned his lesson so bitterly, could be trusted now to make the most of it. It was almost a miracle to happen in old, quiet, little Vicques, where changes came mostly by slow years, not often by thunderclaps. Yet beautiful as it was, there were drawbacks. One must leave one's village where one's self and the grandfathers and the great-grandfathers and before that others, had been born and buried; one must leave one's old house down the street there, and the dream of buying it back, which had kept despair out of these months of poverty; moreover, what about François?

La Claire and Le François, sitting stiffly on the fine chairs in the general's library, where they had been brought to hear the great news, asked that question suddenly in a breath. The general glowered at them from deep eyes.

"There is the screw." He fired the words at them like hot shot and La Claire shrank a little.

"There's always a screw somewhere in every good thing. This time it's the boy."

There was a silence. Claire trembled. "The boy is your boy," the seigneur of the castle went on, quietly enough, and then in a flash brought his fist down on the table with a roar. "But, by heaven, he's my boy, too, now. He's a miracle of a boy and I love him like a son and I want to give him such a chance in life as I would have given had he been born my son. Are you going to stand in the way of that?"

Like bullets the words struck La Claire; she saw the way they led, and she rebelled at fate. It was cruel, now when they were able again to do all for the child which they had planned, to take the child away; yet that very ability to do for him was the gift of the man who wanted him. What could she say?

"It will go hard with the lad to give us up," she brought out softly.

"He won't give you up; I should not respect him if he gave you up," the general thundered, and the two peasants breathed more freely. This great good fortune was not, after all, the price of their son.

By degrees the three came to an understanding.

And the peasant parents, seeing how the general, as he had said, did indeed love their boy; seeing also that he had a power beyond theirs to develop him; seeing that advantages and a career were waiting for little François if their love for him should be unselfish; seeing these things, the father and mother agreed to the general's plan. A tutor was to be engaged for the three children; François was to live at the castle as if—it should be explained to him—he were going away to school, and every Friday he was to walk to the *Ferme du Val*—the Valley Farm—and stay with his people until Sunday afternoon.

So, without realizing the change, the boy who had been the child of a peasant cabin became the child of the castle, and while entirely loyal to the home he still held to be his own, he learned ways of living and breathed in ideas which could not have come to him at the farm. The Fridays were eagerly looked forward to, and it was excitement and rapture to see and share in the new prosperity—the large stone house of a story and a half, roofed with immense oak shingles richly dark with age; the farm buildings clustered about it, connected with stone walls forming a large court; the big granary, standing aside on a hill slope; and the multitude of live stock—the seventy cows, the eight

heavy work horses of the country, the six horses which pertained to the farmer for driving and riding, and the two pairs of mild-eyed oxen, used for breaking the earth. The father and mother reigned busily and happily over all this plenty, and all the brothers and sisters were together once more around them and the white-capped grandmother smiled a benediction from her big chintz chair. Such a greeting as François, her especial boy, got from the grandmother on a Friday evening after his long walk!

This new order of things was well settled before six months had passed after the going of the Marquis Zappi. François was not now allowed to fill the place of secretary except in an incidental way. The new tutor, a serious young man whom the children astonished and worried, copied the pages of the history of the Emperor. It was thought important now that François should work at his studies. There was a rumor already that he and Pietro might go together, perhaps, in a year more, to a military school—in fact, to Saint-Cyr itself if the marquis thought well of the place when he came home. And then in three or four months more something happened.

François was alone with the general when the

letter came; Marcelle, the younger footman, had been sent to the mayor's in the village for the mail, which came by post to Delesmontes and was brought on by foot messengers to Vicques, to the mayor, who distributed it. François' eyes were on his seigneur's face as he read the letter and the boy saw the blood rush through the weather-hardened skin in a brown-red flood, and then fade out, leaving it gray. The boy had never seen the general look so. With that, the big arms were thrown out on the table and the big grizzled head fell into them. That cut to François' soul—his seigneur was in trouble. And before he knew it his childish arm was around the big neck and his cheek against the seigneur's. And the seigneur put up his hand and pressed the little face closer. For long minutes not a word was said and then the general's deep voice spoke, more gently than François had ever heard it.

"It is a good thing to have a son, my François," he said.

Then he lifted his head and told the boy how the friend whom he had found lately, after so many years of separation, had gone away not to come back in this life, and how Pietro was fatherless. François, holding tightly with both fists to the general's

hand, listened wide-eyed, struck to the heart. It was the first time death had come near, and the face of it was grim. Yet instantly he rallied, because he felt that his seigneur needed him.

"But he had a brave life, my seigneur—it is the best thing that there is. My mother said so. My mother told me that we shall smile later, when we are with the good God, to think that we ever feared death on this earth. For she says one spends a long time with the good God later, and all one's dear friends come, and it is pleasant and it is for a long, long time, while here it is, after all, quite short. Is not that true, my seigneur? My mother said it."

But all the general answered was to pat his head and say once more, "It is a good thing to have a son, my François."

Big little Pietro had to be told what had happened and how the general was now to be a father to him as best he might, and Alixe and François would be his sister and brother. He took the blow dumbly and went about his studies next morning, but for many days he could not play, and only François could make him speak. He clung to the other boy, and seemed to find his best comfort in the friendship which it had been his father's parting

inspiration to assure for him. He was handsome—extraordinarily handsome—and a lovable good child, but slow in initiative where François was ready, shy where François was friends with all the world, steady-going where the peasant boy was brilliant. Between the two, of such contrasting types, was an unspoken bond from the first, and at this age it seemed to be the little peasant who had everything to give. Smaller physically, weaker in muscle than the big-boned son of North Italy, he yet took quite naturally an attitude of protection and guidance, and Pietro accepted it without hesitation. There was no jealousy between them. François taught the other, who had grown up petted but untrained in the lonely castle of his ancestors, all that he knew of boyish skill and strength, and was enchanted when his pupil went beyond him, as happened where brute force counted. Yet François was the acknowledged leader.

"Father," Alixe complained, "Pietro will not try to knock François down. Pietro is big, yet it is always François who comes up behind him and throws him on the grass, and Pietro only smiles and gets up. Make Pietro be brave and quick as François is, father."

"Either of my boys is brave enough for you, who

are only a girl," the general growled, and put an arm around her and kissed her brown head.

And Alixe pushed away haughtily. "That is not a way to talk before boys. They might not understand how a girl is worth six boys, and it is you who said it. Besides, I can ride, can I not, father? Nobody has jumped Coq over the hedge by the far field but just me—Alixe." And the boys nodded their dark heads and agreed, and Pietro added:

"She can run faster than I, though my legs are so long." And he smiled at her in his sleepy fashion, honest, admiring, shy.

Things went on in this way for two years or more, and the three studied together under the tutor, and rode Coq in the park, and sometimes went together of a Friday afternoon to the Valley Farm and spent a two-days there never to be forgotten. They were royal guests to Le François and La Claire, and the wholesome simple things done to amuse them were endless; the farm was theirs to play with for that week-end. First, on coming, there was a fine lunch; *gigot*—a leg of lamb—which one gave to princes, with salad and bread and wine and much besides. The grandmother told them stories, the father took them driving on hay wagons; the mother showed them how to milk, to

shell peas and other occult accomplishments. The children were ready to drop everything and do anything with them at any moment. It was like a glorified doll's house built for the little visitors. And according to the season they gathered fruits—raspberries, apples, whatever grew. The *Ferme du Val* was a fairy-land of pleasure.

Also the château at Vicques with three children in it was no convent. That good boy François was forever in mischief. For instance, there was the winter's day when he got the general into difficulty with the church by brutally snowballing the bishop.

"I thought it was Marcelle," François explained penitently. "He pranced just as Marcelle prances. And I was hiding behind the door with my ammunition—fifteen snowballs, my Seigneur—big hard ones. It was twilight, so I could not see plainly. I fired straight, my Seigneur. I gave him one in the neck. And one on the head, and two in the back, and one or two in the stomach when he turned. I only missed once. And also when he turned howling, with his hands out, I sent one into his mouth before I saw. It is too bad it was the bishop, my Seigneur; but why didn't he fight back?"

And the seigneur, scolding ferociously, had a gleam in his eye which lessened François' sense of

wrong-doing. There was also an occasion when, hearing the general give a long order to Marcelle for the stable, François went out hurriedly with a stout cord and fastened it where Marcelle must go. And Marcelle, the prancer, caught his foot and entered the stable door like a comet and fell on Jules, the groom, in his orbit—on Jules carrying a bucket of water; and Jules and the water and Marcelle ricochetted in a thousand-legged tangle into Coq's stall; where Coq, being angry, let forth a neigh and a kick together, one of which broke the innocent Jules' arm. So that François, stating the case to the general, was condemned to do the groom's work till the arm was cured. The days were not monotonous at the château of Vicques. They were not all work and no play to the three very human children living there.

So with work and play life rolled rapidly, and suddenly life was all changed. A governess was coming for Alixe, and François and Pietro were going away to the great military school of Saint-Cyr, near Paris.

CHAPTER XII

THE STRANGE BOY

TWO years slid past noiselessly, unnoticed, and it was vacation time; it was August of the year 1824. The Valley of the Jura was all afloat on a sea of scarlet poppies. They grew higher than the corn, and the wind tossed the waves of them against the sunlight, and the sea of them glittered silver, pricked with a million gold-red points; then the wind tossed the thousand, thousand waves back toward the sun, and the land-sea was shadowy, streaked with flame unendingly. The little river—the Cheulte—rushed down between the fields of gold and scarlet in its immortal hurry, murmuring over the stones. The old château of Vicques—the ruin—lay back behind the corn fields and smiled in hot sunlight at the two thousandth ocean of color which had washed the land up to its crumbling walls, since the Roman governor piled the old gray stones.

A tall lad of fourteen, another boy, slighter, quicker, darker, and a little girl of eleven in a short

white dress, wandered through the ruins, talking earnestly now, silent now, filling the grim place with easy laughter again. Alixe and François and Pietro were growing up; the general already grumbled words about kittens turning into cats, as he looked at them. Yet the general was satisfied in his soul with each one, at whatever age, and glad of each day more of this long unconscious childhood in which they held to one another as closely and frankly as if they were real sister and brothers.

To-day was the first complete day of the vacation; for till now François had been at the farm, working hard with his father at the harvesting. This morning he had come over to spend a week at the château. And without arrangement, only because it was their oldest and most fascinating playground, they had strolled along the steep hillside, into the road that led to the pastures at the foot of the mountain and then to the gate, barring out wagons and cattle, the gate of the fence which enclosed the old château.

The grass was green on the high mound under which lay heaped the stones of the Roman tower, it was long, and waved in the breeze; the ugliness of the barbarism and cruelty of those days lay so buried; on the right were the granaries where the

wicked governor had stored the grain wrung from the country people; over the steep wall to the left was the opening to the corridor which led, as all the world of Vicques had known for centuries, to the treasure-house; it was there that the phantom, the great dog, appeared. The children told the old story to one another; they rebuilt as they talked, in the peace of the summer afternoon, the old war castle; they raised its long walls and placed its narrow windows and machicolated its roofs—in the young minds a dream of the old place rose complete under the new chestnut trees of only two or three hundred years' standing.

"Just behind the great stone there," Alixe formulated, "was the dog's bedroom. Of course, a great monsieur like the dog had his own bedroom—yes, and office, too—and maybe his dining-room."

And the joke was enough on that lazy day of vacation to set peals of light laughter ringing through the ruins. Alixe stopped laughing suddenly.

"Who is that?" she demanded. Her eyes were lifted to the hill rising behind the green mound, and the glance of the others followed hers. A young man, a boy, was coming lightly down the slope, and something in his figure and movement made it impossible even at a distance that it should be any one

of the village. Strangers were not common in quiet Vicques, and why should a stranger be coming over the mountain? The children were silent as they watched the figure drawing closer; it seemed as if an event of importance was about to happen. Rapidly the boy sprang down the mountainside; they could see him plainly now; he was two or three years older than the boys of the château; he was short, slender, compact, with a thin aquiline face, with something about him which the country-bred children did not understand to be that subtle quality, presence. He saw them, and came forward, and his cap was off quickly as he glanced at Alixe. But with a keen look at the three, it was François to whom he spoke.

"Is this France?" he asked.

"But yes, Monsieur," François answered wondering—and in a moment he wondered more. The strange boy, his cap flung from him, dropped on his knees and kissed the grass that grew over the Roman governor's foundations. With that he was standing again, looking at them unashamed from his quiet gray eyes.

"It is the first time I have touched the soil of France since I was seven years old," he stated, not as if to excuse his act, but as if explaining something historical. And was silent.

The children, going over this day's event many times after, could never remember how it happened that they had talked so much. The strange boy talked very little; they could not recollect that he asked questions, after his first startling question; yet here was Alixe, the very spirited and proud little Alixe, anxious to make him understand everything of their own affairs.

"I am Alixe," she began—and stopped short, seized with shyness. Was it courtesy to explain to the young monsieur about her distinguished father? Or was it bragging? She found herself suddenly in an agony of confusion, for all of them were laughing their quick young laughter at her brief statement. Then the stranger made a low bow and spoke in the gentlest friendly tones.

"It is enough. It is a charming name, Mademoiselle Alixe. I believe I shall now think it the most charming name in France."

And Alixe, blushing furiously, yet felt a satisfactory conviction that she had not been at all stupid.

"She has more of a name than that, however, Monsieur," and François stepped across the grass and stood by the little girl, her knight, unconscious of the part he played. "It is a very grand name, the other one. For our seigneur, the father of

Alixe, is Monsieur the Baron Gaspard Gourgaud, a general of Napoleon himself; he was indeed with the Emperor at St. Helena."

François had no false modesty, no self-consciousness; he felt that he had placed Alixe's standing now in the best light possible. The strange boy felt it, too, it seemed, for he started as François spoke of Napoleon; his reserved face brightened and his cap was off and sweeping low as he bowed again to Alixe more deeply. François was delighted. It was in him to enjoy dramatic effect, as it is in most Frenchmen. He faced about to Pietro.

"This one, Monsieur," he went on, much taken with himself as master of ceremonies, "is Monsieur the Marquis Zappi of Italy. His father also fought for the great captain."

The quiet strange boy interrupted swiftly. "I know," he said. "Of the Italian corps under Prince Eugene; also on the staff of Lannes. I know the name well," and he had Pietro's hand in a firm grasp and was looking into the lad's embarrassed face with his dreamy keen eyes.

The children, surprised, were yet too young to wonder much that a boy scarcely older than themselves should have the army of Napoleon at his fingers' ends; he gave them no time to think about it.

"One sees, without the names, that you are of the noblesse," he said simply, embracing the three in his sleepy glance. He turned to François. "And you, Monsieur the spokesman? You are also of a great Bonapartist house?"

François stood straight and slim; his well-knit young body in his military dress was carried with all the assurance of an aristocrat. He smiled his brilliant exquisite smile into the older boy's face.

"Me—I am a peasant," he said cheerfully. "I have no house." Then into the silence that fell he spoke simply. "There are no officers of my family, no battles where my name was known." The controlled glance of the stranger rested on him attentively. With that the look of François changed in a flash; his eyes blazed as he threw out both hands in a strong gesture. "It makes no difference," he cried. "My life was consecrated from its start to the service of the house of Bonaparte. It will count; I live because I believe that. I know surely that I shall yet do a thing worth while for a Bonaparte."

A curious vivid glance shot at the excited boy from under the drooping lids of the newcomer. "Monsieur," he said quietly, "I—" But no one had time to hear the rest. Because Alixe had sud-

denly thrown her arm about François' neck, and was crying out impetuous words.

"He is a peasant—yes. But he is also our brother, Pietro's and mine, and no prince is better than François—not one."

"Or half so good," Pietro put in with his slow tones.

"You are likely right," the stranger agreed laconically.

And then without questions asked, in rapid eager sentences, the three had told him how it was; how François, refusing to leave the cottage, was yet the son of the castle; how Pietro had come and had stayed, how the boys were at school together; how in the vacations they were still sister and brothers, whether at the castle or the farm; all this and much more the three poured out to the silent lad who listened, who seemed to say almost nothing, yet managed to make them feel at every moment that he cared to hear what they said. With that they were talking about the village of Vicques, and its antiquity, and then of the old château; and one told the legend of the treasure and of the guardian dog.

"Just over the wall there is the opening where he appeared to old Pierre Tremblay," François pointed out. "And Pierre was half-witted ever

after. I know, for I have seen him myself. He mumbled."

"That is interesting." The stranger spoke with more animation than he had shown before—he was, after all, for all of his reserve, a boy. "I should like an interview with that dog. I must at least see his kennel. Over that wall? I will climb the wall."

"But no," François put in quickly. "It is unsafe these last five years. I have climbed it, but not in these last years. You can go around and get in by another way and see the hole of the dog."

The older boy's eyes narrowed. "I think I should prefer to climb the wall," he said.

Alixe spoke. "If François can not go it is impossible. He is the best climber of all the country, are you not then, François?"

"Yes," said François.

And Pietro echoed. "But yes. All the world knows it."

"I think I should like to climb the wall," the stranger repeated gently.

And he did. The others watching anxiously, he crawled out on the uncertain pile ten feet in air. A big stone crashed behind him; he crawled on. Then, "I see it," he cried, and waved a triumphant hand, and with that there was a hoarse rumble of loosened

masonry, and down came the great blocks close to his hands—he was slipping—he had jumped. And as he jumped a heavy square of stone tumbled with him and caught him, felled him, had him pinned into the tumbling wall by his coat. And, above, the wall swayed. Then, in the instant of time before the catastrophe, François had sprung like a cat into the center of danger and loosened the coat and pushed the other boy, violently reeling, across the grass out of harm's way.

Alixe screamed once sharply. François lay motionless on his face and the great stones rained around him. It was all over in a moment; in a moment more a shout of joy rose from Pietro, for François lifted his head and began crawling difficultly, with Pietro's help, out of the débris. There was a cut on his cheek, a deep one, bleeding badly, on the back of his hand; and bruises were distributed over him, but by a miracle he had come off with his life and only so much the worse. No sooner was François on his feet than Alixe startled them by turning on the innocent and surprised Pietro in a perfect fury of scorn.

"He is not dead—but that is not your fault," she threw at him. "You who love him so much! You let him go into that danger."

"But—but I didn't know he was going, Alixe," stammered Pietro. "It was—so quick."

"Quick? Yes, François was quick. Why weren't you quick, too? It is always François. Why don't you do something brave once in a while? Why don't you make people admire you, not always François?"

"I like people to admire François," Pietro answered sturdily. "I admire him, too." Then, his shyness lost in eagerness to set the case right with Alixe, he went on. "François always has a thing done before I think of it. That is not my fault. I believe I should not have been afraid to do that—but—François did it."

"It is always so," said Alixe in deep disgust. "François always does it. If you would only prove once that you have—courage."

And at that the stranger broke in, smiling his faint smile. "Mademoiselle Alixe is severe," he said gently. "No one can doubt the courage of a Marquis Zappi." He faced with a quick movement to François, and his look changed. One would not have thought that the controlled cold features could so show warmth. "I have to thank you for my life, Monsieur the peasant," he said, and held out his hand. "Moreover, it is seldom that a prophecy is so

quickly fulfilled." They gazed at him, fascinated by a dignity in him which seemed new.

He went on. "You said a few minutes ago that you should one day do a thing worth while for a Bonaparte. You have done it. You have saved my life."

Bewildered, the children stared, reluctant to comprehend something which seemed out of possibility; François' hand crept to his cap and he pulled it off and stood bareheaded.

"Monsieur, who are you?" he brought out.

The strange boy's vanishing smile brightened his face a second. "I am Louis Bonaparte," he said quietly.

The little court of three stood about the young Prince, silent. And in a moment, in a few sentences, he had told them how, the day before, he had been seized with a hunger for the air of France, which he had not breathed since, as a boy of seven, his mother had escaped with him from Paris during the Hundred Days. He told them how the desire to stand on French soil had possessed him, till at last e had run away from his tutor and had found the ath from his exiled home, the castle of Arenen- rg, in the canton of Thurgovie, in Switzerland, er the mountains into the Jura valley.

"It is imprudent," he finished the tale calmly. "The government would turn on all its big engines in an uproar to catch one schoolboy, if it was known. But I had to do it." He threw back his head and filled his lungs with a great breath. "The air of France," he whispered in an ecstasy. The romantic spirit of this boy always flashed out as a surprise from beneath his calm self-contained exterior. Then, in his usual quiet tones, "I am fortunate," he said. "I have fallen into the hands of friends. Mademoiselle Alixe—the pretty name"—and he smiled his evanescent smile—"is almost of my family because of her father; Monsieur the peasant has proved his loyalty with his life, and"—he turned to the tall Pietro—"a Bonaparte is safe with Monsieur the Marquis Zappi."

"I am Pietro," stated the boy shyly.

The Prince looked at him, narrowing his eyes again. Then "And I am Louis," he flashed back. "It is a good thought. Why not leave out the titles for this afternoon? We are all young—it is summer—it is a holiday. We have an ancient castle and an adventure to play with; what use have we for titles? We shall never see one another again, it is likely. So, shall we not be Alixe and Pietro and François and Louis, four children together for this

"I am Louis Bonaparte," he said, quietly.

one day of our friendship?" And the others laughed and agreed.

For two hours more they told stories and played games through the soft old ruins of the savage old stronghold, as light-heartedly, as carelessly as if there were no wars or intrigues or politics or plots which had been and were to be close to the lives of all of them. Till, as the red round sun went down behind the mountain of the Rosé, François' quick eye caught sight of a figure swinging rapidly down the mountain road where the Prince had come.

"But look, Louis," he called from behind the rock where he was preparing, as a robber baron, to swoop down on Prince Louis convoying Alixe as an escaped nun to Pietro's monastery in another corner. "Look, Louis! Some one is coming whom I do not know. Is it a danger for you?"

And the boy Prince, suddenly grave, shaded his eyes with his hand and gazed up the mountain. Then his hand fell and he sighed. "The adventure is over," he said. "I must go back to the Prince business. It is Monsieur Lébas."

Monsieur Lébas, the tutor, arrived shortly in anything but a playful humor. The boy's mother, Queen Hortense, was in Rome, and he was responsible; he had been frightened to the verge of

madness by the Prince's escapade. It was, in fact, as serious an escapade as one may think, or it might have been. The movements of the Bonapartes were watched at that time by the authorities of France and all other countries as well with a closeness and a jealousy out of proportion. Europe having been turned upside down lately by that name, that name was hedged out by barriers as if the combination of letters in itself was a peril to a government. Louis Napoleon at sixteen was twice removed from the headship of his house; the Duke of Reichstadt, son of Napoleon I., was still living in Austria, and Louis' own brother, the older son of King Louis and Hortense, was with his father in Rome; so that this runaway lad was not the heir to anything, even to the pretensions of a dethroned and exiled family. Yet he was a prince of the Bonapartes, and the magic of the name and of the legend was about him. It was a danger to France to have his footsteps on her soil, so the laws decreed; it would mean for him prison and perhaps death if he were captured in France. No wonder poor Monsieur Lébas was frightened almost to extinction.

The playmates were separated swiftly. Monsieur Lébas refused with something like horror the eager suggestion of the children that he and his charge

should spend the night at the château. The Prince must be gotten off French ground without a moment's delay; Fritz Rickenbach, the steward of Arenenberg, was waiting for them with a carriage over the mountain, to race them back to Switzerland; it was through Fritz indeed, and a discussion of the Prince with him as to distances and directions, that the distracted tutor had known how to follow his quarry.

So the three-hours' friends were mercilessly torn apart, and the children of the château came home in the twilight stirred, excited, awed, with a story for the seigneur of a wandering prince and a crumbling wall; of a midsummer afternoon's dream; of a frightened tutor and a quick sharp parting; a story which the seigneur found it hard to believe. He made each one of them tell the tale. François finished the last.

"And Louis would have come back with us to the château, for he wanted to see the general who had been one of his uncle's family—he said that, Monsieur the Seigneur. But Monsieur Lébas would not hear of it, and Louis must do as he said, he told us. But at the end Louis took each of our hands—and he kissed Alixe's hand—and he said that he would never forget us or this afternoon in the old château

of Vicques. And I believe it, my Seigneur, for there is something about him which makes one believe he will remember—that Louis."

"Louis, Louis!" the general growled in repetition, staring sternly at the slim figure which faced him. "You speak that name very glibly. Do you happen to remember, François, that the lad whom you call Louis so easily may one day be Emperor of France?"

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROMISE

"*MON DIEU!*" said the general.

It was six years later. At the new château not a blade of grass seemed changed. The general stood in the midst of close-cropped millions of blades of grass as he stopped short on the sloping lawn which led down to the white stone steps which led to the sunken garden. At each side of the highest step lifted a carved stone vase, blazing in the September afternoon with scarlet geraniums, and garlanded with vines. At the foot of the steps stood two more vases, and at each side of the graveled path, ribboned with a long flower-bed, at even intervals of thirty feet, another stately pair of them—the gray stiff vases spilling intoxicating brightness of red flowers. They led the eye down a line till, a hundred yards away, the line broke into a circle where a sun-dial set on a fantastic stone figure of a satyr marked the center of a grass plot. Massive stone seats held up by carved crouching griffins faced each other across the sun-dial; on one of these,

in the sunny stillness of the garden, sat a girl and a young man. Alixe, in her riding-habit, with a feather in her hat, and gauntleted gloves on her hands, was so lovely as to be startling. She looked at the ground, half shy, half laughing, and beat the grass with her riding-whip. François was leaning toward her and talking, and the general, coming slowly down the lawn, felt a flood of pride rise in him as he looked at this successful picture of a boy which he had done so much to fashion. The two had been riding together, and François appeared, as most men do, at his best in his riding clothes. With that, as the general marched slowly down the velvet slope, unseen by them, regarding them—his girl and his boy, this happy sister and brother—with that the brother lifted the sister's hand and, bending over it, kissed it slowly, in a manner unmistakably unbrotherly.

"*Mon Dieu!*" gasped the general, and turned on his heel and marched back to his library.

All that afternoon he stayed shut up in the library. At dinner he was taciturn.

"Well then, father," Alixe said at last, after the two had tried every subject in vain to make him talk. "It will be necessary now to buy all the berries that are grown for ten miles around."

"Berries?" growled the general, bewildered.

"Surely."

"Why berries?" ferociously.

Alixe looked up at him innocently. "Isn't it berries which big bears live on? Or will you eat us, my father, when you have bitten our heads off and torn us to pieces?"

And the general, when he had been betrayed into a laugh, sighed deeply and got up from his chair, dinner not being over, and stalked back to his library. Never had such a thing happened.

"What is it?" Alixe asked of François. "He is not ill—he told us that. Have you done something, you wicked sinful boy, to trouble him?"

François shook his head thoughtfully. "I can not think of anything," he said, and his eyes met hers truthfully. "But we shall know soon. He is as frank as a child; he can not keep a grievance from the people he loves."

Which was a true judgment, for the next morning the general sent for François to come to him in the library. A letter had been brought a short time before and was lying open on the table by his hand.

"François," began the general in his deep abrupt tones, "I am in trouble. Will you help me?"

"Yes, my Seigneur," said François quickly.

"If it means a sacrifice to yourself?"

"Yes, my Seigneur," François answered.

"We shall see." The general's strong lips were set and he said nothing more for a moment, but gazed thoughtfully at the letter which lay under his big outspread fingers. At length, "You remember Pietro's father, the Marquis Zappi?" he demanded.

"Surely, my Seigneur."

"You remember the story I once told you, how he saved my life in Russia?"

"I have never forgotten it."

"You realize that he was dearer to me than any man on earth?"

"I have always believed it so," said François.

"Good," growled the general. "You will bear that in mind. I wish to tell you now of an arrangement—a hope which the Marquis Zappi and I had formed together. It was to be the crown of our friendship and its perpetuation; it was to have been our happiness together; it would be—it will be, if all goes well, the happiest thing which could come to my life, now that he is gone. Would you break that hope and take that happiness from me?"

François, startled, caught a quick breath. "My Seigneur! You should not ask. You know I would give my own happiness for yours."

The general glared at him, frowning. "We shall see," he said again, and then—suddenly as a shot from a cannon—"Does Alixe love you, François?"

There was no mistaking what he meant, and François did not evade it. A flame of scarlet crept in a swift diagonal across the warm brown of his boyish cheeks, but his clear eyes met the general's searching look frankly. He hesitated a moment.

"I—I think not, my Seigneur," he answered in a low voice.

The general drew in an enormous sigh of relief. "Thank God," he said devoutly, and then put out his hand and laid hold of François' strong lean fingers. "My François, you are dear as my own son; you know it. You are next to Alixe—before Pietro—ah, yes, much before Pietro. You will understand it is not from any lack of affection that I put him before you in this."

François, high-strung, deeply stirred, felt his hand throb suddenly in the general's, and the general felt it, too.

"I am hurting you," the deep voice said—and only one or two people in the world had heard that voice so full of tenderness. "I am hurting my son. But listen, François. It was the dearest wish of Pietro's father—it has been my dearest wish for

years—that Alixe and Pietro should one day be married. It is that which would be the crown of a friendship forged in the fires of battle-fields, tempered in the freezing starving snow fields of Russia, finished—I hope never finished in all eternity."

The general's great frame was shaking; a silence cut across his speech. He went on.

"Such a marriage would carry on ourselves, our friendship, and keep it a living thing on the earth long after we had left. That thought is thrilling to me; it is my greatest wish. Do you see now why I was troubled when yesterday I saw you, in the garden, kiss Alixe's hand? I was afraid the child had given her heart to you, and that my dream, Alessandro's and mine"—he spoke this as if to himself—"might never be realized."

François, his head bent, his eyes on the general's hand which held his, answered very quietly. "I see," he said.

"I forgot," the general went on, almost as if he were alone and were talking aloud to himself. "I forgot they were not real brother and sister. It was mad of me. Such a beauty as my Alixe—such a wonderful lad as my François! Yet I did not dream of the change till yesterday. I have gone through much since then, but, thank God, thank the good

God, it is not too late. She does not love him. It has not gone further than what I saw, François?" He fired the words at the young fellow in his natural manner again. "You have not put ideas into her head more than what I saw?"

"No, my Seigneur." The voice was without inflection; the look was still on the big hand which held his own fast.

"You would not take her from Pietro, who, I am sure, loves her?"

François looked up sharply, but the general did not notice. He spoke slowly. "I promised Pietro's father"—the boy seemed to be out of breath—"to be Pietro's friend—always," he said.

The general smiled then and let the fingers go, and turned to the letter on the table before him. "Good!" he said. "You are always what I wish, François," and it was quite evident that the load was off his mind. "I am contented that no harm has been done to either of my children. As for you, however, you are twenty. You are full of ambition and soldier-craft and politics and fighting—there is small place left for love in such a boiling kettle of fish as you. If my girl has touched your heart a bit, as it looked yesterday,"—and the general chuckled gently—"well, you are twenty—the wound

will heal." He slapped the letter on the table. "I must now have a long talk with you on an interesting subject—yourself."

The general was by this in high good humor. A spasm caught the face of the boy and left it pale, but the general, busy at putting on his spectacles, did not see. When he turned to look at him François was as usual.

CHAPTER XIV

WITH ALL MY SOUL

THE general swung around to the lad. "François, this letter is about you." He tapped the rustling paper. "It is an opening, I believe, into the sort of life which you have desired, a life of action and of danger."

"It is what I wish," broke in François eagerly.

"I know it," the general spoke approvingly. "But before we discuss it I want to tell you, my François, that I am not only glad for your sake, but proud for my own sake, to send you, my adopted son, where you will have an opening for distinction. You know that I am satisfied with you—you do not know how deeply. Ten years ago, François, I found you a little peasant lad in the village; it did not take long to see that you had a character out of the common. If I had left you where you belonged you would still have been out of the common, you would still have lifted yourself. But circumstances would not have allowed you very full play, and it seemed to me

you deserved full play. I loved you the more for refusing to come to me; that showed the stuff in you—loyalty—self-sacrifice. But I have managed to outwit you about that fairly well, *eh, mon petit?* I have given you your chance in spite of yourself. And you have taken it—*mon Dieu!* You have made the most of your chance!

"When you graduated two years ago at the top of the school, when Pietro left us and went off to his castle in Italy and you came back to me here as fine a young gentleman as any duke's son, I said to myself that I had done well. Somewhere, from that remarkable mother of yours, I believe, you—a peasant—have got the simplicity and the unconsciousness that are the finest touches of the finest breeding. I am very proud of you, François. I was proud when, just after you graduated, the leaders of the Bonapartist faction in France came to this château for a secret convention and I could present you to them as my adopted child, as my collaborator in the new book, our military history of the Austerlitz campaign—that had a good sound for a lad of eighteen. And, name-of-a-dog! you held up your end—you could talk to them like a soldier and a statesman. *Mon Dieu,* yes!

"And then, when they wrote and suggested send-

ing you as ambassador on the secret mission to the Duke of Reichstadt last year, I almost burst with pride to think how well you were fitted for it; fitted to talk with princes, equipped with the knowledge and the statecraft to handle a delicate political situation. It is no easy thing to find such an ambassador, for such a mission—a man not marked or known, yet with the subtle and strong qualities which make a man marked. You, with your youth and peasant name and air of a young noble, filled the difficult want. You did it well and won laurels from critical old diplomatists.

"I have been worrying a bit since to have kept you here chained to me and the writing of a history, when you ought to be at the job of making history. Yet you are only twenty. Time has not pressed, so far. And moreover, I await a revolution when men such as you will be needed; the Bonapartist yeast is working under the surface of all the country; the time will come when a single crashing blow perhaps will shake France and place one of the Emperor's name on the Emperor's throne. And at that time you, Monsieur, must be ready to put your strength into that blow. You and I have faith, my son, in that accolade of the Emperor of your infancy; you and I believe that, as he said, you may be one day

'a Marshal of France under another Bonaparte.' It is for you to fulfil that prophecy."

The general, his big hands on his big knees, stared at the boy with burning eyes, stirred by his own words into a true French access of enthusiasm. But the boy's eyes did not meet his as usual with the flame of whole-hearted response which he loved; yet the general, carried away by his own generous feelings, was not dissatisfied. This was his boy; what he did was right. He drew in a great breath and let it out in a sigh of large contentment.

"I have talked you to extinction, François," he growled. "And in all my words I have not managed to tell you what it is that I am talking about." He tapped the letter again which lay under his hand. "Pietro wants you to come to him as his secretary."

François' large eyes lifted to the general's face, inquiring, startled, childlike. "Pietro!" he said slowly. "I had not thought of that."

"Yet you knew that Pietro was heart and soul in the plots of the Italian patriots?"

"Yes."

"But you had not thought of going to help him fight?"

"No, my Seigneur. I had thought only of the fight for which I must be ready here."

"This Italian business will be good practise," said the general, as a man of to-day might speak of a tennis tournament. "And you and Pietro will be enchanted to be together again."

François smiled, and something in the smile wrung the general's heart.

"François, you are not going to be unhappy about little Alixe?"

Quickly François threw back, as if he had not heard the question: "My Seigneur, I will go to Pietro; it will be the best thing possible—action and training, and good old Pietro for a comrade. My Seigneur, may I go to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" The general was startled now. "A thousand thunders, but you are a sudden lad! Yet it will be no harder to give you up to-morrow than it would be next month. Yes, to-morrow, then, let it be."

François stood up, slim, young, alert and steady, yet somehow not as the boy who had come in to the general an hour before; more, perhaps, as a man who had been through a battle and come out very tired, with the noise of the fighting in his ears.

"I will go to the farm to-night, to my mother and my father. And this afternoon I will ride with Alixe, if you do not want me for the book, my

Seigneur—and if she will go. May I ask you not to tell Alixe of this—to leave it to me to tell her?"

"Yes," agreed the general doubtfully. "But you will be careful not to—upset her, François?"

"I will be careful."

"And—and you will do what you can to help Pietro, will you not, my son?"

A quick contraction twisted François' sensitive mouth and was gone, but this time the general saw. "You may trust me, my Seigneur," the boy said, and moved to the door; but the general called to him as his hand touched the latch.

"François!"

"Yes, my Seigneur." He faced about, steady and grave, and stood holding the door.

"Francois, my son—I have not hurt you—very much? You do not love Alixe—deeply? Do you love her, François?"

There was a shock of stillness in the old dim library. Through the window—where the children's shouts had come in ten years before to the marquis and the general—one heard now in the quiet the sudden staccato of a late cricket. The general, breathing anxiously, looked at François, François standing like a statue. The general repeated his question softly, breathlessly. "Do you love her, François?"

With that the great eyes blazed and the whole face of the boy lighted as if a fire had flamed inside a lantern. He threw back his head.

"With all my soul," he said. "And forever."

CHAPTER XV

I SAID IT, AND I WILL

A RUSHING mountain stream—white-veiled in the falling, black-brown in the foam-flecked pools—tumbled, splashed, brawled down the mountain; the mountain hung over, shadowy; banks of fern held the rampant brook in chains of green. Alixe and François, riding slowly in the coolness of the road below, looked up and saw it all, familiar, beautiful, full of old associations.

"One misses Pietro," François said. "He always wanted to ride past the *'Trou du Gouverneur'*."

A Roman legend had given this name to the deep pool of the brook by the road; it was said that the cruel old governor had used it, two thousand years back, for drowning refractory peasants. Alixe gazed steadily at the dark murmuring water.

"Yes, one misses him. Is life like that, do you suppose, François? One grows up with people, and they get to be as much a part of living as the air, or one's hands—and then, suddenly, one is told that

they are going away. And that ends it. One must do without air, without hands. What a world, François!"

"We are not meant to like it too much, I believe, Alixe," said François sunnily. "It is just *en passant*, this world, when you stop to consider. The real business will come, I suppose, when we are moved on a step farther. Friendships and separations will not seem so badly arranged then, probably. This is school, this life, I gather. My mother says it is not very important if one has a good seat in the school-room or a bad; if one sits near one's playmates or is sent to another corner, so long as one is a good child and works heartily at one's lessons. It is only for a day—and then we go home, where all that is made right. Not a bad idea of my mother's, is it, Alixe?"

"Your mother is a wonderful woman," Alixe answered thoughtfully. "She lives like that. She never let things trouble her, not even when your father lost everything. Did she, François?"

"No," said François. "She is one of the few people who know what the real things are and live in them. It is hard to do that. I can not. I care so bitterly for what I want. It is"—François hesitated—"it is very hard for me to give up—what I

want." He stumbled over the words; his voice shook so that Alixe shifted in the saddle and looked at him inquiringly.

"François! Is anything wrong? Must you give up something?"

François laughed then and patted the brown arching neck of Capitaine, successor to Coq. "Everybody must give up things; and renunciation is the measure of strength," he said with twenty-year-old generalization, yet with a light in his face which might have been the smiling of an aged saint. "You were talking about Pietro," he went on rapidly; "about our separation from him, our good old Pietro! I do miss him. Yet that was inevitable from the beginning. That was life. Pietro is Italian; he has his place over there"—and he nodded to where far-off Italy might lie. "He is a man, Pietro, every inch, already. He has gone to fill his place, as quietly, as unhesitatingly as he will do everything that comes to him."

"Everything that comes to him—yes." Alixe spoke a little scornfully. "But—François—he does not go very fast to meet the things that come to him."

François' eyes flashed at her. "You have never been fair to Pietro, Alixe."

"Not fair?" Alixe interrupted, and laughed.

"No, not fair," repeated the boy. "You do not seem to see what he is—a heart of gold, a wall of [illegible]. It is not his way to talk much, but he has great qualities."

"What?" asked Alixe.

"What!" François repeated. "You to ask that! You know as well as I that Pietro is a Bayard—without fear and without reproach. He is unchanging as the ocean—he is to be believed in his slightest word. You know that it would be a commonplace for Pietro to be killed rather than play false to the smallest trust. He is a fanatic of reliability."

"You make him out a slow worthy person," said Alixe, and drew up the horse's bridle. "You can respect a man with all those sterling qualities, but—he isn't very—dashing to be like that. Is he? I like a man to have initiative—some gift of leadership."

François looked at her sternly. "Dashing! Initiative! Do you remember, Alixe, what it is that Pietro has done? Do you realize that Italy is in the stress of a desperate struggle for liberty? That a forlorn fight against the power of the Austrians is on her hands, and that Pietro went back at eighteen to take his part with the patriots? Do you realize

what danger that means? Danger not only of death, but of worse, of years of imprisonment in some dungeon. Noblemen of higher rank than Pietro are living in chains there now. It is our playmate Pietro who is facing this—Pietro, who has breathed the free air and ridden with us through this valley for so many years. He realizes it. He went with his eyes open. His family are marked; he will be a leader against the Austrians; he will be one of the first to be punished if the Austrians conquer—and they are very strong. He went back to Italy to a lonely life, to a life of intense effort and activity and danger, as quietly as if he were going back to school. And you, you whom"—François stopped—and went on—"you whom he loves better than any one in the world—wrong him."

By now Alixe was half sobbing. "How horrid you are, François! You jump at conclusions. You are not the only person who cares for Pietro. I do not wrong him—not in my thoughts. I abused him to yóu on purpose. I wanted to see what you would say for him. One does that. If one—really cares—for a person, one has the right. It is not disloyalty; I could abuse my father—I could say any horrid thing I chose, and not a word, not a shadow of a thought, would be disloyal, because I love him so

that it would all be nothing compared to that. I know Pietro is brave; I know he has gone into danger—is it so very bad, François? But—I am irritated often with Pietro—because you are always the hero. It is always you who do the brave thing, and it is easy for every one to—to adore you, François. You seem only to smile at a person and they—they care for you. And Pietro is just—quiet and reliable. It isn't fair for you to have—everything." There were tears in her eyes now, and a quiver in her voice, and the last word was punctuated by an indignant sob.

"Alixe—dear,"—then François stopped. "You need not be afraid that I shall have more than Pietro," he began uncertainly. "For it is not going to be so. He will have what—what I would give my life for." Then he hurried on. "I see how it is," he said gently, "and you are right to care so loyally for Pietro. He is worth it. And you must never care less, Alixe—never forget him because he has gone away. He will come back." The boy spoke with effort, slowly, but Alixe was too much occupied with her own tumultuous thoughts to notice. "He will surely come back and—belong to you more than ever. He will come back distinguished and covered with honors, perhaps, and then—and

then—Alixe, do you see the chestnut tree at the corner that turns to the château? It is a good bit of soft road—we will race to that tree—shall we? And then I will tell you something."

The horses sprang into a canter and then a gallop, and stretched their legs and flattened down into a sharp run. The girl and the boy were flying side by side through the mellow landscape; the gray towers and red roofs of the château were in the distance; the little Cheulte lay to the right, its pools like a string of quicksilver beads spotted on the fields; the mountain of the Rosé, calm and enormous and dark, lifted out of the country to the left. Many a time in the six years to come François saw that picture and felt the vibrating air as they rushed through it. He had strained his very soul to talk at length as he had of his rival, of his friend; he felt sick and exhausted from the effort; now he must tell her that he was going to-morrow, and he must not let a word or a look tell her that he loved her. The horses raced merrily; Alixe sat close to the saddle with the light swinging seat, the delicate hand on the bridle, which were part of her perfect horsemanship, and over and over as he watched her ride François said to himself:

"I will give my happiness for the seigneur's—I

"Alixe, dear,"—then François stopped.

said it, and I will. I will be a friend to Pietro always—I said it, and I will."

Over and over the horses' flying feet pounded out that self-command, and at length the music of the multiplying hoof beats grew slower, and with tightening rein they drew in and stopped under the big chestnut. Alixe was laughing, exhilarated, lovely.

"Wasn't it a good race? Didn't they go deliciously?" she threw at him. And then, "We will go around by the Delesmontes Road; it is only three miles farther, and it is early in the afternoon; there is nothing to do."

François spoke slowly. "I am afraid—I must not, Alixe. I am going to the farm to-night."

"To the farm!" Alixe looked at him in surprise. "But you were not to go till to-morrow. My father and I will ride over with you. Have you forgotten?"

"No," said François, "I have not forgotten—no, indeed. But I am going away to-morrow, Alixe."

"Going away?" Alixe turned sharply, and her deep blue glance searched his eyes. "What do you mean, François?" And then, imperiously: "Don't tease me, François! I don't like it."

François steadied, hardened his face very carefully, and answered: "I am not teasing you, Alixe. I did not tell you before because—" he stopped, for

his voice was going wrong—"because I thought we would have our ride just as usual to-day. I only knew about it myself this morning. I am going to Pietro."

"Going—to Pietro!" Alixe was gasping painfully. "François—it is a joke—tell me it is a poor joke. Quick!" she ordered. "I won't have you play with me, torture me!"

"It is not a joke." The boy's eyes were held by a superhuman effort on the buckle of the bridle-rein lying on his knee. "There was a letter from Pietro this morning. The seigneur wishes me to go. I wish to go. I am leaving to-morrow."

"Going to-morrow!" The girl's voice was a wail. "You—taken away from me!" Then in a flash: "I hate Pietro! He is cruel—he thinks only of himself. He wants you—but I want you too. How can I live without you, François?" Then softly, hurriedly, while the world reeled about the boy, sitting statue-like in his saddle: "It is just as I said. You are as much a part of my life as the air I breathe—and you and my father and Pietro say quite calmly, 'The air is to be taken away—you must do without it.' I can not. I will choke!" She pulled at her collar suddenly, as if the choking were a physical present fact.

No slightest motion, no shade of inflection missed François; still he sat motionless, his eyes on the little brass buckle, his lips set in a line, without a word, without a look toward her. And suddenly Alixe, with another quick blue glance from under the black long lashes—Alixe, hurt, reckless, desperate, had struck her horse a sharp blow—and she was in the road before him, galloping away.

He let her go. He sat quiet a long time. As she turned in, still galloping, at the high stone gateway of the château, his eyes came back again to the little shining buckle. It seemed the only thing tangible in a dream-universe of rapture and agony. Over and over he heard the words she had said—words which must mean—what? Had they meant it? Had he possibly been mistaken? No—the utter happiness which came with the memory of the soft hurried voice must mean the truth—she cared for him, and then over and over and over he said, half aloud, through his set teeth:

"I said that I would give my happiness for my seigneur's; I said that I would be a friend to Pietro; I will."

CHAPTER XVI

THE MOTHER OF A PRINCE

THE walls of the palace at Ancona dropped to the sea; against them the waves danced. Out on the blue water lay a fleet of fishing-boats, and the wind flapped torn sails, and the sunlight glanced on battered hulls and littered decks. The woman who sat by an open window of the palace pushed the black trailing of her gown from her, as if the somberness hurt her eyes; she laid her head against the window-frame and stared at the breeze-tossed waves and the fishing fleet.

"It may be our only hope of escape—those wretched boats," she said, half aloud, and her blue eyes were full of sadness, almost of hopelessness.

A sound caught her ear, and she lifted her head quickly. The door into the next room was partly open and some one moved there, that was all. She turned, the lines of her figure falling again into a melancholy pose.

"The doctor takes a long time," she spoke, and gazed out once more to the water.

There had been a spirited young girl years before who had romped in the gardens of Malmaison, who had led the laughter which echoed through those avenues of lime and plantain, whose sweetness and vivacity had drawn the figure of Napoleon himself into the vortex of gladness which was her atmosphere. Always brightness seemed to follow her through the enchantment of the place; always she seemed to move in gaiety. To-day, on a March morning of 1830, this was she—Hortense.

The daughter of France she had been, the queen of Holland, and now for years an exile. Here, ill, a fugitive, in her nephew's palace at Ancona, with the Austrians at the gate of the city, she waited in anxiety almost more intense than she could bear the word of the doctor as to her son. Five days before, at Forli, her older boy had died, and her sore heart stirred with a sickening throb as she thought of this other—Louis—now her only child, lying in the room beyond in a high fever, ill with the disease with which his brother had fallen. A woman's soul might well be overcrowded with such sorrow and such fear, but there was more. Her two boys had thrown in their lot shortly before with the Italian

revolutionists, and had fought, and had distinguished themselves. And now that the revolution of the Romagna was a failure, that the Austrian army was advancing victoriously, now that death had taken the older to safety, the younger—Louis—the invalid lad in the room beyond, was in imminent danger. He was excepted from the general amnesty; the natural ways of escape were closed, for the authorities of Tuscany and of Switzerland had let her know that the Prince would not be permitted in those territories. From Rome two of her son's uncles, Cardinal Fesch and King Jerome, had sent word that if he were taken by the Austrians he was lost. And at the moment when Hortense had decided to carry her boy off to Turkey by way of Corfu, an Austrian fleet appeared in the Adriatic.

But the spirit and the wit of the girl of Malmaison were strong in the woman who must save her son. Wherever she went she made new friends, so winning was her personality; wherever she went she found old friends who had not forgotten her. There had been a young English earl in the Malmaison days who had lost his steady heart to the piquant fascination of the Princess Hortense as she laughed at him from the side of Josephine. He had gone away saddened, but had never quite forgotten his

French sweetheart. At Florence, a month before, he had appeared, and to his influence she owed a British passport made out for an English lady traveling with two sons. No one would suspect that she would dare take the route described in it—through Paris to England—but Hortense dared much always, and everything for her children. She had set out from Florence to find them, to draw them from the doomed army of insurgents; to save them from the Austrians. When she found them, Napoleon, the elder, was dead and Louis was coming down with his brother's malady. But the boy kept up for his mother's sake, and the two, fresh from their loss, had pressed on hurriedly to Ancona, for there was not a moment to spare. So ill herself that she could not stand alone, she made all the arrangements for their escape; English liveries, a bed in the calèche, all were arranged; even the tragedy of filling the place of the lost boy was accomplished—as it must be, for her passport read for an English woman with two sons. The young Marquis Zappi, bearer of despatches from the revolutionists to Paris, gladly agreed to travel with them. Suddenly Louis collapsed. He had been dangerously ill for days, but had borne up pluckily, hiding every sign so that he might help his mother. The collapse had

been the day before, and the doctor had promised that twenty-four hours' rest would give him strength to risk the journey so necessary to him.

In such a critical state were the affairs of the black-gowned woman who gazed from the palace windows to the sea. The doctor was with her son. The boy's condition seemed to her no better, but worse than the day before; she waited an official verdict. The door opened and she looked up as a tall man came in.

"Doctor," she stammered and stopped—she feared to ask.

"Your Majesty," the old man said gravely, "I grieve to be the bearer of bad news."

"He is worse, Doctor?" The words came with a gasp; she felt that she could not face more trouble.

"Yes, your Majesty, the fever has increased since yesterday. With his youth and strength we may hope—if he is carefully nursed—but to move him would be madness."

Queen Hortense struck her hands together. "What can I do? What *can* I do?" she demanded, and the doctor stood gravely regarding her, helpless, with all his devotion to the house of Bonaparte, to suggest a way out. "If he stays he will be taken—they will execute him. If he goes he will

die on the way," she cried in an agony of indecision. "Doctor, tell me, think for me—how can I save him?"

And the doctor still stood silent, suffering with the impotent desire to help her. "If—if only the Austrians might think that the Prince were gone," he stammered, and hated himself for the futility of the words. But the Queen stood with a hand half lifted, arrested. Her blue eyes were alive with the crossing and weaving of swift ideas, and then with a catch of her breath she laughed at him like a pleased child. "Doctor, you are a very clever man," she said. "Together we are going to save the Prince."

The vivacity of the schoolgirl of Madame de Campan flashed for a moment into her manner, warmed to sudden life by the joy of hope. The doctor waited, enchanted, bewildered, to hear his cleverness explained, but Hortense did always the unexpected thing. She shook her finger at him.

"I'm not going to tell you," she said. "At least not till I have to—not till to-morrow at all events. But all to-day, as you visit your patients you may think that you are saving the Prince from his enemies—and to-morrow you may know how. Good-by, Doctor," and, puzzled and pleased, the physician was gone.

"Send Fritz to me," the Queen ordered, and a moment later the young man who was for years the confidential servant of Hortense, who knew more of the history of her middle years, perhaps, than any other, stood before her. "Fritz, when does a packet sail for Corfu?" she demanded.

Fritz Rickenbach considered it his business to know everything. "To-night, your Majesty," he answered unhesitatingly.

"You will see that the luggage of Prince Louis is on board, and that a carriage is ready to take him there," she ordered.

"But yes, your Majesty." Fritz still stood regarding her seriously. "It is a great happiness to me, your Majesty, that his Highness is well enough to travel."

Fritz knew perfectly that there was a complication somewhere, and he wanted to know what it was. His curiosity was patent, but his deep interest in the affairs of his people could not be an impertinence, and the Queen smiled at him.

"You shall know about it, Fritz," she said. "The Austrians are coming. The Prince can not be moved. If they take him, it means death. They must believe that he is gone, and it is for you and me to make them believe it, Fritz. You must get a pass-

port signed by all of the authorities—that is easy to-day; you must engage his place in the packet for to-night; you must tell the servants—tell every one —that the Prince goes to Corfu, and you must see that the proper luggage is on board. It will be known that I stay, but they will not molest an ill woman. Do you understand the plan, Fritz?"

"But yes, your Majesty," Fritz answered with his face alight.

And so the packet sailed for Corfu, and all day before the sailing the servants of Hortense moved busily between the palace and the boat, carrying luggage and making arrangements. And only one or two knew the secret that Prince Louis Bonaparte had not sailed in the packet, but lay tossing with fever in a little room beyond his mother's, carried there for greater privacy by Fritz and the doctor.

Two days later, as the Queen sat quietly by her boy's bedside, she heard that the vanguard of the Austrians had entered the city, and almost at once Fritz came to tell her that the palace in which she was staying had been chosen for the residence of the general commanding. The probability of this had not entered her mind; it seemed the last straw. The Austrian officer demanded the Queen's own chamber for his chief, but when the steward's wife

told him the name of the lady who was in the rooms which had not been given up, he bowed deeply and said not a word. It was another of that brotherhood scattered over Europe—the friends of Hortense; it was an officer who had protected her years before at Dijon.

So for a week they lived side by side with their enemies and only a few feet lay between the Prince and capture, for his room was next that of the Austrian general, with but a double door between. It was a life of momentary anxiety, for the Queen feared each time the invalid spoke that they might recognize a man's voice; when he coughed she turned white. But at the end of the week Louis was at last well enough to go. He was to leave Ancona disguised as one of his mother's lackeys, the young Marquis Zappi was to put on another livery, and over the frontier they were both to change and be the sons of Hortense traveling on the Englishman's passport.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RUSE

THE day before the escape, as the Prince, weak and ill yet, lay in bed, word was brought that a messenger of the marquis wished to see the Queen.

"Let me see him too, my mother," the silent, grave, young man begged. "It may be that I can help you. I wish to help."

In a moment Fritz introduced a slight alert person whose delicate face was made remarkable by a pair of eyes large and brilliant and full of visionary shadows, yet alive with fire. One saw first those uncommon eyes and then the man. If they had not been entirely concerned with his message they might have remarked that he trembled as he looked at the Prince's face; that his voice shook as he answered the Queen's question.

"I have the unhappiness, your Majesty, to bring you bad news," he said, speaking to her, but still gazing eagerly at the Prince. "The Marquis Zappi, my employer, is ill. He was taken suddenly last

night, and to-day is much worse, and there is no chance that he can travel with your Majesty to-morrow."

The Queen threw out her hands with a gesture of hopelessness. "What can we do?" she exclaimed. "Am I to plan and plan and have always an unconquerable obstacle? Can I not save my boy? I might have known that everything seemed too bright this morning, too good to be true. Yet it is not possible that after all they should"—she looked at her son; her courage came springing back. "They shall *not* take you," and her eyes flashed defiance at a world of enemies, and she went over and threw her arm about his neck. "Louis, don't let yourself be excited, dearest. They shall *not* take you. I can save you."

It was as if she put a spur to her brain; there was a moment's silence and the two lads watched her brows drawing together under the concentration of her brain.

"Of course," she said suddenly, and laughed—a spontaneous laughter which seemed to flood her with youthfulness. She turned her blue glance swiftly on the newcomer, the slender boy with the luminous eyes. "You are in the employ of the Marquis Zappi, Monsieur?"

"But yes, your Majesty. I am the secretary of Monsieur le Marquis." She paused a second, seemed to take stock of the young man, of his looks, his bearing, his accent.

"You are French. Have you a sympathy with the family of my son, with the Bonapartes?"

It was as if a door had been opened into a furnace, so the eyes blazed. "Your Majesty, I would give my life for his Highness," he said quietly. The impassive face of the young Prince turned toward the speaker, and the half-shut heavy glance, which had the Napoleonic gift of holding a picture, rested on him attentively. Louis Bonaparte seemed to remember something.

"What is your name, Monsieur?" he asked, and it might have been noticed that his head lifted a little from the pillow as he waited for the answer.

"François Beaupré, Sire." The young man seemed to be out of breath. "Sire!" Louis Napoleon repeated. And then, "I have seen you before. Where was it? Not in Rome—not in Switzerland —ah!" His hand flew out, and with that François was on his knee by the bedside, and had kissed the outstretched thin fingers, and the Prince's other hand was on his shoulder fraternally.

"The old château of Vicques—my playfellow,

François. I told you then I was going to remember, didn't I?" Louis Napoleon demanded, laughing boyishly. "Mother, he saved my life from the falling wall. Do you remember the story of my runaway trip?" And Hortense, smiling, delighted to see her sad-faced boy so pleased and exhilarated, did remember, and was gracious and grateful to the young Frenchman. "It is a good omen to have you come to us to-day," she said with all the dazzling charm which she knew how to throw into a sentence. And then, eager with the headlong zest of a hunter for the game, she caught the thread which wove into the pattern of her scheming. "You would risk something to save him, would you not? You will take the place of the marquis and travel with us, to-morrow, and help me carry away the Prince to safety?"

The dark young face was pale. "Your Majesty, it is a happiness I had not dared to hope for yet."

"Yet?" the Prince demanded laconically. He saved words always, this lad, but he always said his thought.

The other boy's face turned to him, and he answered very simply, "But yes, your Highness. I have known always that I should have a part in your Highness' fate."

Louis Napoleon, in spite of practical hard-working qualities, a sentimentalist, a dreamer, above all a man dominated by a destiny, felt a quick shrill. Unknown forces were working throughout Europe to place him one day on his uncle's throne; such was the profound belief of his life. Might not this man's words, electrical with sincerity, point to his existence as one of those forces? It was as if he had come suddenly on deep water trickling underground through a dry country. He plunged his hand into the spring.

"Tell me," he ordered.

But the Queen saw only the vagaries of irresponsible boys in this spasmodic conversation; it was important to arrange matters; she brushed aside the short vague sentences, and the Prince, a flicker of a smile on his grave face, was silent.

In the gray dawn of the next morning there was a slight stir through the palace, and out between the lines of drowsy Austrian sentinels passed a procession of whose true character they were far from aware, else history had changed. The guard watched the departure; the sick lady—Hortense—late Queen of Holland, as they all knew more or less clearly, drove away slowly in her traveling calèche, and on the box was a young man in the livery of a

groom whom no one of the half-awake soldiers knew for Prince Louis Napoleon; in the middle of the second carriage sat another youth of two or three years younger who was, the Queen's servants had been told, the Marquis Zappi. Their passports were examined and they went through the gates of the city without awakening the least suspicion. But Hortense, as she lay back in the calèche, felt her heart batter against its covering so that each breath was pain; her mouth seemed parched; when she tried to speak the words would not come, or came in gasps; it seemed an agonizing century before the city gates were passed. And all the while the sick boy, so carefully guarded from a cold breath of air for days back, sat outside in a chilly drizzle, and his mother's anxiety was of yet another sort as she felt the dampness blow in upon her own shelter. She drew a sob of relief as they gained the fields—yet their dangers were only begun. All over the country which they were about to cover they were known, the dethroned Queen and her two sons, and Louis Napoleon's immobile young face was of an individuality not to be forgotten.

Not once in all their dramatic series of escapes and disguises were Hortense and her sons betrayed, but they had to fear the indiscretion of their friends

more than the malignity of their enemies, and this part of Italy was full of friends high and low.

Over and over again they were recognized, but mother and son learned to trust the untiring watchfulness, the ready resources of the Marquis Zappi's understudy, the young Frenchman who had so fortunately and easily fitted into the empty place on their program. The great dark eyes, smoldering with unspoken loyalty, were always watching the Prince, and he saved the invalid's strength and softened the hardships of travel in countless ways; no chance seemed to escape him. Louis Napoleon, living an intense life under a cold and reserved exterior, responding as to an electric wire, to every thread of incident which seemed a possible fiber in the fabric weaving, he believed, for him—the fabric of his imperial power—Louis Napoleon lost none of the young man's devotion. There was little conversation between them, for the sick boy, often in great pain, had no strength to spare from the exciting and strenuous days, where adventure and escape succeeded adventure and escape, where each step meant danger, and each turn of the road anxiety. But his heart was touched with a gratitude which his impassive face was far from showing; he would remember his old playmate, François Beaupré.

At length it was time for Prince Louis and the sham marquis to drop their liveries and travel as the sons of the English woman for whom their passport was made out. The clothes which Beaupré was to wear had belonged to the young man dead at Forli —Louis Bonaparte's brother—and as he presented himself dressed in them, he saw the painful flush which crept upon the Prince's face.

"Your Highness, I am sorry," he stammered. "It is grief to me." And then he threw himself impulsively on his knees by the side of Louis' chair. "My Prince, I wear them with reverence," he said, and then, hesitating, he added: "Perhaps I would seem less unworthy if your Highness knew that, mere secretary as I am, I am yet more. I am noble. It is not simple François Beaupré whom you honor, but a man created Chevalier by the sword of the Emperor."

The dull eyes of the Prince shot a glance between drooping lids. "What is it you mean, Monsieur?" he demanded. But at the moment the Queen entered the room, and the lads sprang to their feet. Her eyes caught the picture of the young Frenchman in his new dress at once; they opened wide and then filled with tears.

"Louis, Louis!" she cried, and laid her hand on

his arm. "He looks like him; he looks like Napoleon!"

And the brother, considering, saw that there was a certain likeness, in the alert figure and the dark pale face. From that on Hortense wished François with her as much as possible, and as he was supposed to be her son it was natural that he should be. There was a rushing anxious day or two, a frontier passed in the middle of the night where trouble with a sleepy commissioner almost brought disaster upon them; there was a city to be gone through in broad daylight, which was filled with traveling English, any one of whom might know the Queen; there was a foolish, enthusiastic, young officer who noisily greeted the Prince at another post; there were hairbreadth escapes everywhere. At length one night, in the valley of Chiana, they came to a quiet little village where, so near were they to safety, it seemed prudent to take a night's rest. After this new luxury the party, refreshed and encouraged, breakfasted together the next morning.

A deferential knock sounded at the door of the breakfast-room. François sprang to it, and the landlord stood in the opening, bowing elaborately—a soldierly old man with thick grizzled hair.

"A thousand pardons for disturbing miladi and

the messieurs," and miladi smiled forgiveness. "Might an old soldier of the Emperor dare to say that one could not help knowing the Emperor's kinsmen?" He bowed low again to both boys alike, and again Hortense smiled at him. It was comforting to know that the two seemed brothers to the world in general, and she was so used to recognition and loyalty now that they appeared to belong together. "Might an old soldier of the Emperor dare to show miladi—her Majesty—and the Highnesses, the sword which the Emperor himself had touched, the sword which he, Jean Gredin, an old cuirassier of the guard, had carried in four battles? There was a little story of the sword, a story also of the wonderful goodness of the Emperor, which miladi—her Majesty—permitting, he would like to tell to her, as also to the Highnesses."

And, her Majesty permitting, and the boys pleased and interested, the old cavalryman brought the sword and drew it from its sheath and gave it to each of them to handle, and called on them to remark how it was as keen and bright as it had ever been at Ulm or Austerlitz. He cleared his throat, strongly, for the tale.

"Miladi—her Majesty—permitting," he began, "it was on a day two days after the great battle of

Austerlitz. The country, as her Majesty and the Highnesses will remember, was in a most dangerous condition. Desperate bands—" Why was it the landlord stopped?

The party, caught by the fervor of his manner, stared at him, annoyed as the tale of the Emperor, promising so well, halted at its beginning. The man stood as if drawn to his tiptoes, every muscle tense, his head turned toward the doorway, listening.

And suddenly they were aware of a stir, a growing noise; there were galloping horses; there was a jingle of harness, and voices coming nearer. With a step backward the landlord flashed a glance from under bushy brows down the corridor, through the open door at the end, which gave on the court of the inn.

"Mon Dieu!" He faced the three, standing startled. He spoke fast and low. "Madame, it is a squad of Austrian soldiers; they are upon us. What can we do?" He hesitated only a second. "Bleu-bleu—my horse—saddled under the tree yonder—if one of the Princes—if the Prince—" He glanced uncertainly from one lad to the other.

But the game was out of his hands. Quicker hands than his had caught the play François

Beaupré, the saber of the old cavalryman gleaming in his grasp, sprang to the doorway. He swung about, his great eyes radiating earnestness.

"It is Monsieur there who is the Prince," he explained rapidly to the landlord. "Hide him, take care of him—I will draw them away. When they are gone, see that the Prince and the Queen escape. That is for you; you are responsible."

There was the rush of a flying figure down the hallway, and out François flashed across a broken line of a dozen dismounted riders, straight toward the landlord's horse held by a groom under the trees. There was a shock of startled silence as the impetuous apparition, saber gleaming at wrist, shot across the court. Then there was a hubbub of voices, and a mass of uniformed figures fell toward him as he threw himself on the horse. A soldier caught at the bridle. The naked sword twinkled and the man was under Bleu-bleu's feet. For a second there was a vortex of men and a frantic horse, and riding the storm a buoyant figure of fury, flashing a blade, with infinite swiftness, this way and that. Then horse and lad shot out from the living canvas, streaked the background of trees a second and were gone, and the Austrian troopers scrambled into their saddles to follow.

Through sun-spotted, breeze-tossed woods tore the chase; across a road and over a low fence, and still François led, but the heavy horses gained. It was a hopeless hunt, for the landlord's mount was no match for the big cavalry horses, yet the rider's light weight and clever horsemanship counted, and it was fully four miles from the inn when Bleu-bleu stumbled and fell at a ditch, and François pitched over his head. His lead was short by now, and they were on him in a moment, in a mass; he was seized by a dozen burly Austrians.

The leader took a sharp look at him as he stood panting, staring defiantly.

"What is this?" the Austrian demanded sternly, and wheeled to a trooper in a bunch. "Friedrich, thou knowest the cub of the Bonapartes. Is this lad he?"

And Friedrich lunged forward, gasping, for he had run his horse hard, and shook his head. "No, my captain. I have never seen this one."

The boy looked from one to another of the threatening group, smiling, composed in spite of his quick breathing. The captain took a step close to him and shook his fist in his face.

"You have fooled us, you young game-cock, have you? But wait. Do you know what we will do to

you, you bantam of a Frenchman? Do you know how we will treat you for this, we Austrians?"

Color deepened in his cheeks, and François drew up his figure magnificently. His face was radiant; he gloried in the theatrical beauty of the situation; for the rest, he was, as the villagers of Vicques had said long ago, born without fear.

"You may do what you like, Messieurs," he said gaily. "It is for you; my part is done. The Prince is safe."

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER FIVE YEARS

THE window of the cell was small, but it was low enough so that a man standing could see from it the vast sky and the sea-line six miles away, and, by leaning close to the bars, the hill that sloped down into wooded country; beyond that the sand of the shore. The jailer stood close by the little window in the stormy sunset for a better light as he dropped the medicine.

"One—two," he counted the drops carefully up to nine, and then glanced at the prisoner on his cot in the corner, who tossed, and talked rapidly, disjointedly. "It is high time that the doctor saw him," the jailer spoke, half aloud. "If the governor had been here this would not have been allowed to run on. I am glad the governor is coming back."

With that the prisoner threw off the cover from his shoulders and sat up suddenly, with wild bright eyes staring at the jailer.

"Pietro!" he called in astonishment. "Why, my

dear old Pietro!" and flung out his hands eagerly toward the man, and would have sprung from the bed to him.

But the jailer was at his side and held him down, yet gently. "Be quiet, Signor," he said respectfully. "It is only old Battista; you will see if you look. Only Battista, who has taken care of you these five years."

The brilliant dark eyes stared at him hungrily; then with a sigh the light went out of them and the head fell on the pillow.

"Ah, Battista," he said, "my good Battista." A smile full of a subtle charm made the worn face bright. He spoke slowly. "I thought it was my friend—my best friend," he explained gently.

"Will the Signor take the doctor's medicine?" Battista asked then, not much noticing the words, for the sick man was clearly light-headed, yet with a certain pleasant throb of memory which always moved within him at the name of Pietro. It happened that the name stood for some one dear to the jailer also. The signor took the medicine at once, like a good child.

"Will it make me better, do you think, Battista?" he asked earnestly.

"But yes, Signor; the doctor is clever."

"I want to be better; I must get well, for I have work to do as soon as I come out of prison."

"Surely, Signor. That will be soon now, I think, for it is five years; they will let you go soon, I believe," Battista lied kindly.

Yet he knew well how the Austrian tyrants left men for a little thing, for a suspicion, for nothing, lying in dungeons worse than this for three times five years. It was a mere chance, he had heard, that this young signor had not been sent to Spielberg instead of this place; to horrible Spielberg, where one might see high-bred nobles of Italy chained to felons, living in underground cells. Battista shuddered. He had come to have a great affection for this prisoner; he trembled at the thought that some caprice of those in power might send him even yet to Spielberg. Moreover—Battista hardly dared think it in his heart, but he himself was Italian—a patriot. And behold him, jailer to a man who was suffering—he believed—for the patriot cause. His soul longed to help him, yet he was afraid, horribly afraid, even to be too gentle with his prisoner. It was an off chance that had left him here, Battista Serrani, in the castle of his old masters, after the castle had been confiscated by the Austrians, to be used by them as a prison. But what could he do?

He was a poor man; he had a wife and children to think of; his knowledge of the place had been useful at first to the new lords, and then they had seen that he was hard-working and close-mouthed, and had kept him on till they had forgotten, it seemed, that he was Italian at all. So here he was, set to guard men whom he would give his life to make free. But the masters knew well and he knew that it meant more than his life to be disloyal—it meant the lives of his wife and children. There would be small pity for such as Battista when great noblemen were treated like felons. So Battista was trusted as if he were Austrian born.

All this flashed through his mind as he gazed pitifully at the sick prisoner, only just out of boyhood, yet with that band of white hair, the badge of his captivity, in the thick brown thatch of his head. He lay very still now, as if his tossing were all finished, his face turned to the wall; Battista, soft-hearted, cautious, stopped to look at him a moment before going out. As he looked the dark head turned swiftly and the bright big eyes met his with a light not delirious, yet not quite of every-day reason.

"You are good to me, Battista," the boy said, "and just now you gave me a great pleasure. It warms me yet to think of it, for, you see, I thought

you were Pietro—my dear Pietro—the Marquis Zappi."

Battista, breathless, stared, stammered. "Whom —whom did you say, Signor?"

But the prisoner had flashed into reason. The color went out of his face as the tide ebbs. "Battista, did I say a name? Battista—you will not betray me—you will not repeat that name? I would never have said it but that I was not quite steady. I must have been out of my head; I have never spoken his name before in this place. Oh, if I should bring danger to him! Battista, for God's sake, you will not repeat that name?"

Battista spoke low, glancing at the heavy iron door of the cell. "God forbid, Signor," he whispered, "that I should speak, here in his own castle, the name of my young master."

There was a long silence. The prisoner and his jailer gazed at each other as if saying things beyond words. Then the boy put out his long hot fingers and caught the man's sleeve.

"Battista," he murmured, "Battista—is that true? Is it possible? Do you know—my Pietro?"

"Know him, Signor?" Battista's deep voice was unsteady. "My fathers have served his for eight hundred years." The man was shaking with a

loyalty long pent up, but François lifted his head, leaned on his elbow, and looked at him thoughtfully.

"But, Battista, I know you now; he has spoken to me of you; it was your son, the little Battista, who was his body-servant when they were children?"

"Yes, Signor."

"I did not dream of it; I never knew what castle this was; I never dreamed of Castelforte; you would not tell me."

"I could not, Signor. It was forbidden. It is forbidden. I am risking my life every minute."

"Go, Battista," and François pushed him away with weak hands. "Go quickly—you have been here too long. There might be suspicion. I could not live if I brought trouble on you."

"It is right so far, Signor," Battista answered. "It is known you are ill; I must care for the sick ones a little. But I had better go now."

With that he slipped to his knees and lifted the feverish hands to his lips. "The friend of my young master," he said simply, but his voice broke on the words. The traditional faithfulness of centuries was strong in Battista; the Zappis had been good masters; one had been cared for and contented always; one was terrorized and ground down by these "Austrian swine"; the memory of the old

masters, the personality of any one connected with them, was sacred. Battista bowed his head over the hands in his own, then he stood up.

"I shall be back at bedtime, Signor," he said quietly, and was gone.

But François had an ally now, and he knew it. The excitement of the thought, the joy of dim possible results buoyed his high-strung temperament like a tonic. He must be, he would be careful beyond words to guard against any danger, any suspicion for Battista, but— There were chances even with that provision. Here was hope. It is necessary, perhaps, to have been five years a prisoner in a cell in an unknown castle in a foreign land to know what the first glimpse of hope may mean.

Instantly, with the hope working in him, he began to get well. Little by little, watching fearfully against the peril of conversations long enough to seem suspicious to eyes always alert, he told Battista of the close friendship of the château in France, of the splendid old officer of Napoleon and of his daughter, the beautiful demoiselle, who was Alixe; of the years at school together, the boyish adventures innumerable. Every word Battista drank in; he had not seen the young marquis since he had left Castelforte with his father on the journey which

took them to Vicques. When, at the end of his school-days, the boy of eighteen had come back to his country, the castle had already been seized by the Austrians, and it had not been safe for Pietro to come into his own country. But the man's memory of his little lord was vivid and loving; he listened eagerly to the least detail of his unknown older life.

And day by day the prisoner who could tell him such things, who was the friend of his master, who had lived with his master, became more of an idol to him, stood to him more and more in the place of the marquis. From the beginning of the imprisonment he had had an affection for this young stranger; few people ever came under the influence of François without having an affection for him; but the day of his mention of Pietro had made Battista his slave.

A person of more importance than Battista had fallen under the spell of François' personality. The governor himself had been attracted by the young Frenchman. The governor, Count von Gersdorf, was a vain, discontented, brilliant Austrian, at odds with the world because he had not risen further in it. He was without society in this mountain fortress of his, and longed for it; he had a fine voice and no one to sing to; he liked to talk and had no one to

talk to. François, with his ready friendliness, with his gift of finding good in every one, with his winning manner and simplicity which had the ease of sophistication, was a treasure-trove of amusement to the bored Austrian. Moreover, François could play a guitar and accompany his songs, and knew enough music to appreciate the governor's really beautiful voice; his delight in it was better than the most finished flattery. He had taught the governor French songs; they sang together, and the count roared them out and then roared with laughter, and François smiled and was pleased. It had come to be a custom with the governor, during the last two years, to have the Frenchman brought down very often to his room for dinner, and to spend the evening. All this was against regulations—but who was to know? The count was lord of life and death at Castelforte, and if higher powers came once in a year or two, no one would dare to speak of the doings of the governor except the governor.

Things stood so with the prisoner at the time of his discovery of the identity of his jailer and of his jail. The governor at that time was away on a visit to Vienna, looking for a promotion; he came back elated and good-humored in the prospect of a change within the year. But the heart of François sank as

he thought what the change might mean to him. This man had treated him with unhoped favor in some ways. He realized what it meant to reason and health to have those evenings away from his narrow cold cell, even in such company as the governor's. Besides which François persistently found good qualities in the governor. He had been allowed books to read in his cell, though no writing materials. Strange as it may seem, it had been in some ways a happy life. The mystical thoughtful bent of the boy had developed in the great quiet loneliness; with the broad Italian sky and the sound of the sea in his constant companionship, his mind had grown to a grasp of the greatness of living and the smallness of life. A vista of thought before unknown had opened out to him in the long solitary days. When he awoke in the morning he let himself be floated out on a tide of meditation where strange bright visions met him like islands in a southern ocean. He looked forward to these thoughts as to events, as a mystic of India looks to Nirvana.

In the light of this happiness of prison, the hardships of prison, the drain on his health from dampness and lack of air and poor food were small discomforts, hardly to be noticed in the greatness of

his blessings. These trials would be over shortly; the real things, friendship, love, enthusiasm, were eternal. Moreover, it was action he dreamed, not quiescence, as he looked from the barred window at the vast blue depths of Italian sky, depths profounder, more transparent than elsewhere. His belief in his star, in its fusion some day to come into the larger star of the Bonapartes, had been strengthened, fixed, by the adventure which had landed him in the desolation of an Austrian prison. He had saved the Prince's life; it was an omen of greater things which he should do for the Prince. If no more came of it he would have done his part; he could die happy, but he believed without a shadow of doubt that more was to come.

"'Some day a Marshal of France under another Bonaparte,'" he said to himself one day, staring through the bars at his meadow—he called the sky so. He smiled. "But that is nothing. To help place my Prince on the throne of France—that is my work—my life."

He talked aloud at times, as prisoners come to do. He went on then, in a low voice.

"If there were good fairies, if I had three wishes: Alixe—the Prince made Emperor—François Beaupré, a Marshal of France." He laughed happily. "It

is child's play. Nothing matters except that my life shall do its work. Even that is so small; but I have a great desire to do that. I believe I shall do that—I know it." And he fell to work on a book which he was planning, chapter by chapter, in his brain.

But, if he were to escape ever, the chance was increased infinitely by the going back and forth to the governor's room. A new governor might keep him shut up absolutely. It had been so while the count was away; then he had been ill, and the lieutenant in command would not let a doctor see him till he became delirious; that was the ordinary treatment of prisoners. François, thinking over these things on a day, felt, with a sudden accent on the steady push of his longing for freedom, the conviction that he must get free before the count left, else opportunity and force for the effort would both be gone forever. And on that day Battista brought in his midday meal with a look and a manner which François remarked.

"What is it, Battista?" he asked softly.

The man answered not a word, but turned and opened the door rapidly and looked out. "I thought I had left the water-pitcher. Ah, here it is—I am stupid," he spoke aloud. And then, finger on lip dramatically, he bent over the young man. "My

son—the little Battista—has had a letter. The young master wishes him to come to him in France, to serve him. He is going in two days."

It was whispered quickly, and Battista stood erect.

"The Signor's food will get cold if the Signor does not eat it," he spoke gruffly. "I do not like to carry good food for prisoners who do not appreciate it. I shall bring less to-morrow."

But François, hardly hearing the surly tones, had his hand on Battista's arm, was whispering back eagerly.

"Where does he go, in France?"

"To Vicques," the low answer came. François sank back, tortured.

Going to Vicques, the little Battista! From Castelforte! And he, François, must stay here in prison! His soul was wrung with a sudden wild homesickness. He wanted to see Alixe, to see his mother, to see the general; to see the peaceful little village and the stream that ran through it, and the steep-arched bridge, and the poppy fields, and the corn! The gray castle with its red roofs, and the beech wood, and the dim, high-walled library, how he wanted to see it all! How his heart ached, madly, fiercely! This was the worst moment of all

his captivity. And with that, Battista was over him, was murmuring words again. Something was slipped under the bedclothes.

"Paper—pens. The Signor will write a letter this afternoon. And to-morrow little Battista will take it."

And the heart of François gave a sudden throb of joy as wild as its anguish. He could speak to them before he died; it might be they could save him. His hands stole to the package under the coarse blanket. It seemed as if in touching it he touched his mother and his sweetheart and his home.

CHAPTER XIX

GOOD NEWS

IN the garden of the château of Vicques, where the stiff, gray stone vases spilled again their heart's blood of scarlet and etching of vines; where the two stately lines of them led down to the sun-dial and the round lawn—on one of the griffin-supported stone seats Alixe and Pietro sat, where Alixe and François had sat five years before.

Alixe, again in her dark riding-habit, with the blue feather in her hat and the gauntleted hands, was grown from an exquisite slip of a girl into a woman more lovely than the girl. Her eyes, when she lifted the long, exaggerated, curled lashes, held fire and force, and knowledge of suffering, it might be, under their steady smile, but held all these in control. This was a woman able not only to endure things, which is the gift of most women, but to do things. Pietro, his big arm stretched along the back of the stone seat, watched her—as Pietro had watched her always. It seemed never to trouble her

to turn and find his honest eyes fixed calmly on her face. Pietro, whose illness at Ancona had put François into his place in the èscape of Louis Napoleon, had put François in his place as the prisoner of Austria now these five years—Pietro had managed to get away from Italy and had joined Queen Hortense and her son before they entered Paris. Both the Prince and Pietro had moved heaven and earth to find out the fate of François. That he had been taken by the Austrian squad at the end of his wild ride they knew. More than this they could not discover, except that one or two things pointed to the conclusion that he had been immediately executed. The Prince believed this, and Pietro came to believe it. But Alixe had never believed it.

In these five years Pietro had not been back to Italy; the "inevitable Austrians" had put down in 1831 the revolution in the Romagna, the rising in which Prince Louis and Pietro, the Marquis Zappi, had taken part. In the war-torn country no movements of any importance had taken place since that. Pietro, a Carbonaro, a member of "young Italy", a marked man, was not safe inside the Italian frontier. With other patriots he awaited in a foreign country the day when he might go back to fight again for a

united Italy. In the meantime he conspired, planned, worked continually for the patriot cause, and as continually he tried, though now without hope, to find a trace of François. The boy who had dashed through the Austrian soldiers on that morning at Chiana, and leaped to the landlord's horse and cleared his way through with the play of the old soldier's sword, and led a wild race, to fall into the enemy's hands at last—the boy had disappeared from the face of the earth. Pietro, grieving deeply for his old friend, grieving bitterly because it was in filling his place that François had met his fate, believed him dead. But Alixe did not believe it. Pietro was often at Vicques now, and the two went over the question again and again. One might not speak to the general of François; the blow had been heavy, and the old soldier's wound had not closed; it might not be touched. But Pietro and Alixe spoke of him constantly.

To-day, as they sat in the garden, they had been going over the pros and cons of his life or death for the thousandth time. Pietro's quiet gray eyes were sad as he looked away from Alixe and across the lawn to the beech wood.

"God knows I would give my life quickly if I could see him coming through the trees there, as we

used to see him, mornings long ago, in his patched homespun clothes."

Alixe followed the glance consideringly, as if calling up the little, brown, trudging figure so well remembered. Then she tossed up her head sharply —"Who?"—and then she laughed. "I shall be seeing visions next, like François," she said. "I thought it was he—back in the beech wood."

"I see no one." Pietro stared.

"But you have no eyes, Pietro—I can always see a thing two minutes before you," Alixe threw at him. "There—the man."

"Oh," said Pietro. "Your eyes are more than natural, Alixe. You see into a wood; that is uncanny. Yes, I see him now. *Mon Dieu!* he is a big fellow."

"A peasant—from some other village," Alixe spoke carelessly. "I do not know him," and they went on talking, as they had been doing, of François.

And with that, here was Jean Phillippe Moison, forty now and fat, but still beautiful in purple millinery, advancing down the stone steps between the tall gray vases, making a symphony of color with the rich red of the flowers. He held a silver tray; a letter was on it.

"For Mademoiselle."

Mademoiselle took it calmly and glanced at it, and with that both the footman and the Marquis Zappi were astonished to see her fall to shivering, as if in a sudden illness. She caught Pietro's arm. The letter was clutched in her other hand thrust back of her.

"Pietro!"

"What is it, Alixe?" His voice was quiet as ever, but his hand was around her shaking fingers, and he held them strongly. "What is it, Alixe?"

She drew forward the other hand; the letter shook, rustled with her trembling. "It is—from François!"

Jean Phillippe Moison, having stayed to listen, as he ought not, lifted his eyes and his hands to heaven and gave thanks in a general way, volubly, unrebuked. By now the unsteady fingers of Alixe had opened the paper, and her head and Pietro's were bent over it, devouring the well-known writing. Alixe, excited, French, exploded into a disjointed running comment.

"From prison—our François—dear François!" And then: "Five years, Pietro! Think—while we have been free!" And then, with a swift clutch again at the big coat sleeve crowding against her:

"Pietro! See, see! The date—it is only two months ago. He was alive then; he must be alive now; he is! I knew it, Pietro! A woman knows more things than a man."

With that she threw up her head and fixed Jean Phillippe, drinking in all this, with an unexpected stern glance. "What are you doing here, Moison? What manners are these?" Then, relapsing in a flash into pure human trust and affection toward the anxious old servant: "My dear, old, good Moison—he is alive—Monsieur François is alive—in a horrible prison in Italy! But he is alive, Moison!" And with that, a sudden jump again into dignity. "Who brought this, Moison?"

Jean Phillippe was only too happy to have a hand in the joyful excitement. "Mademoiselle, the young person speaks little language. But he told me to say to Monsieur the Marquis that he was the little Battista."

Pietro looked up quickly. "Alixe, it is the servant from my old home of whom I spoke to you. I can not imagine how François got hold of him, but he chose a good messenger. May I have him brought here? He must have something to tell us."

Alixe, her letter tight in her hands, struggled in her mind. Then: "The letter will keep—yes, let

him come, and we can read it all the better after for what he may tell us."

So Moison, having orders to produce at once the said little Battista, retired, much excited, and returned shortly—but not so shortly as to have omitted a fling of the great news into the midst of the servants' hall. He conducted, marching behind him, the little Battista, an enormous young man of six feet four, erect, grave, stately. This dignified person, saluting the lady with a deep bow, dropped on one knee before his master, his eyes full of a worshiping joy, and kissed his hand. Having done which, he arose silently and stood waiting, with those beaming eyes feasting on Pietro's face, but otherwise decorous.

First the young marquis said some friendly words of his great pleasure in seeing his old servant and the friend of his childhood, and the big man stood with downcast eyes, with the color flushing his happy face. Then, "Battista," asked the marquis, "how did you get the letter which you brought mademoiselle?"

"My father," answered Battista laconically.

"How did your father get it?"

"From the signor prisoner, my Signor."

Alixe and Pietro looked at him attentively, not

comprehending by what means this was possible. Pietro, remembering the little Battista of old, vaguely remembered that he was incapable of initiative in speech. One must pump him painfully.

"Was your father in the prison where the signor is confined?" Alixe asked.

The little Battista turned his eyes on her a second, approvingly, but briefly. They went back without delay to their affair of devouring the face of his master. But he answered promptly. "Yes, Signorina; he is there always."

"Always?" Pietro demanded in alarm. "Is Battista a prisoner?"

"But no, my Signor."

"What then? Battista, try to tell us."

So adjured, little Battista made a violent effort. "He is one of the jailers, my Signor."

"Jailers? For the Austrians?" The face of the marquis took all the joyful light out of the face of little Battista.

"My Signor," he stammered, "it could not be helped. He was there. He knew the castle. They forced him at first, and—and it came to be so."

"Knew the castle!" Pietro repeated. "What castle?"

Battista's eyes turned to his master's like those of

a faithful dog, trusting but not understanding. "What castle, my Signor? Castelforte—the Signor's own castle—what other?"

A sharp exclamation from Alixe summed up everything. "Your castle is confiscated; they use it as a prison. François is a prisoner there, Pietro! All these years—in your own home!"

"I never dreamed of that," Pietro spoke, thinking aloud. "Every other prison in Austria and Italy I have tried to find him in. I never dreamed of Castelforte."

And with that, as if pulling teeth, they got by slow degrees all that he knew from the little Battista. The letter, tight in Alixe's hand, was still unread; this living document seemed to bring them closer to their friend than even his written words. There were some things in the living letter, moreover, not to be found in the one of paper and ink. The little Battista, being put to the wall, told them what his father had told him, what the doctor of the prison had told his father. How the prisoner's health was failing; of that band of white in his dark hair; at last that the doctor had said to the big Battista that the prisoner could not live more than two or three years as things were; that even if released he might not regain his health, would not

live, perhaps; that the only thing which could save him would be a long sea voyage.

"A long sea voyage!" Alixe groaned and put her face into her hands suddenly, and Pietro looked very sorrowful. "A long sea voyage for a political prisoner in the hands of the pitiless Austrians!"

At the end of the interview the little Battista put his hand into his breast pocket and brought out another letter, thickly folded. Would mademoiselle have him instructed where to find the mother of the signor prisoner? He had promised to put this into her own hands. He must do it before he touched food.

And Jean Phillippe Moison, who had lurked discreetly back of the nearest stone vase, not missing a syllable, was given orders, and the huge little Battista was sent off up the stone steps between the scarlet flowers, up the velvet slope of lawn, in charge of the purple one.

Half an hour later the general walked up from the village, walked slowly, thoughtfully through the beech wood, his face hardly older than when he had come to Vicques, but sterner and sadder; his still soldierly gait less buoyant than it had been five years ago. There were voices coming to him down the wind through the trees. The general's keen eyes—

as keen as Alixe's—searched the distant leafy dimness and made out shortly Alixe and Pietro hurrying to meet him. Why, he wondered to himself as the two young people swung through the wood—why had nothing more ever come of this long friendship? He felt that Pietro loved the girl; he knew that the girl loved Pietro, at least as a sister loves a brother. But she was not a sister; why had it gone no further? Alixe, now a very beautiful woman, a woman of a charm greater than beauty, had had many lovers, but no one of them had touched her heart, and this Frenchman and his daughter were on strange terms for a French family. So intimate, so equal had the two been always that the general would not have arranged a marriage for her as would any common father of his country. Alixe must have her free choice. Alixe was no ordinary girl to be happy in a marriage of convenience; she must have love, his Alixe.

But what was Pietro about? And what, moreover, was Alixe about? Did she care for him? Or—his heart sank at the thought—was it possible that her big warm heart was wearing itself out for a man dead or worse than dead—for François, shot by the Austrians, or else buried without hope in an Austrian fortress? The general went over this

question many times as he walked or rode about the Valley Delesmontes, as he sat in the high dim library, as he lay in bed at night and listened through the stillness to the Cheulte rushing down over its stones half a mile away. He wished above all other wishes to know Alixe married to Pietro; yet when he saw them together he was jealous for the memory of François, of his boy François, whose career had promised so brilliantly, whose dashing courage, whose strength and brains and beauty and charm had been his pride and delight almost as much as the brave bright character of Alixe. He himself had sent the boy away to keep him from Alixe. It might be he had sent him to his death; it might be he had spoiled Alixe's life as well. He could not tell.

He puzzled over it as he came up through the park—and then he saw Alixe and Pietro coming joyfully toward him, running light-heartedly, calling to him with excited gay voices. It stabbed the general's heart; a quick thought came of that other who had been always with them, now dead or worse, of that other whom these two had forgotten. And with that they were upon him, and Alixe was kissing him, hugging him, pushing a letter into his hand, up his sleeve, into his face—anywhere.

"Father—good news—the best news—almost the best! Father, be ready for the good news!"

"I am ready," the general growled impatiently. "What is this foolery? *Sabre de bois!* What is your news, then, you silly child?"

And Alixe, shaking very much, laid her hand on his cheek and looked earnestly into his eyes. "Father, François is alive!"

For all his gruff self-control the general made the letter an excuse shortly to sit down. Queer, that a man's knees should suddenly bend and give way because of a thrill of rapture in a man's psychological make-up! But the general had to sit down. And then and there all that had been extracted from little Battista was rehearsed, and the letter read over from start to finish.

The letter, still kept in that cabinet in Virginia, told them all that has already been written or told, and which was of importance to this chronicle. But some of it was what has been quoted about the old days when the three children rode Coq in the park, and about the morning when the Marquis Zappi came with his little boy Pietro. The general, hearing that, was afflicted with all varieties of a cold, and Alixe choked, reading it, and broke down, and read again, half crying, half laughing.

"But he is alive, father! Alive! That is happiness enough to kill one. I never knew till now that I feared he was dead."

And the general, getting up and striding about fiercely, ripped out savage words such as should be avoided—many of them—and alternating with symptoms of sudden severe influenza. Then he whirled on the two.

"Alive—yes! But in prison—in that devil's hole of an old castle!" And Alixe looked at Pietro and laughed, but the general paid no attention. "He must be got out. There is no time to waste. *Diable!* He is perishing in that vile stable! What was that the lad said about the doctor's speech, that only a long sea voyage could save him? One must get him out, *mon Dieu,* quick!"

Alixe, her hand on his arm, put her head down on it suddenly and stood so for a moment, her face hidden. Pietro, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, looked at the general with wide gray eyes, considering. With that Alixe flashed up, turned on the young Italian, shaking her forefinger at him; her eyes shone blue fire.

"This is for you, Pietro. If we should lose him now, just as we have found him! Now is the time for you to show if you can be what is brave and

strong, as François has shown. It is your castle; you must save him."

Pietro looked at the girl, and the color crept through his cheeks, but he said nothing.

"Alixe, my Alixe," her father put an arm around her. "One may not demand heroism as if it were bread and butter. Pietro will not fail us."

"Alixe always wished me to be brilliant like François," Pietro spoke gently. "But I never could."

"Yet, Pietro, it is indeed your time," Alixe threw at him eagerly. "François must be rescued or he will die."

"Yes," Pietro answered quietly. "François must be rescued."

He was silent a moment, as if thinking. His calm poised mind was working swiftly; one saw the inner action in the clear gray eyes. The general and Alixe, watching him, saw it.

"I think I know how," he said.

CHAPTER XX

THE STONE STAIRCASE

BATTISTA'S prisoner stood at the barred window high up the steep side of the castle and stared out wistfully at the receding infinity of blueness—his meadow. In the three months since his letter had gone to France, he had grown old. The juices of his youth seemed dried up; his eyes were bloodshot, his skin yellow; there was no flesh on him. The waiting and hoping had worn on him more than the dead level of the hopeless years before. There was a new tenseness in the lightly-built figure, even in the long, delicate, strong fingers. The prisoner had caught a whiff of the air of home and was choking for a full breath.

It had not been so before. The brightness of his temperament had done him good service at first. Eager, vehement, energetic, he had the heart of a contented little child, and it had led him to play and be happy in his prison, as a buoyant child will make

a boat of the chair in which he is set for a punishment and sail away into adventures. This man, developing out of the boy thrown into prison five years ago, might well prove to have limitations. Full of force and fire and gentleness, he had the virtues of his qualities, but he had their defects, too. It might yet well be that he would fall short in sober judgment; it might be that he would not be found fitted for any complication of responsibility. Yet there was in him something of the vision of the mystic, something of that power—called what it may be—which has in all ages worked miracles and moved mountains. Out of his companions, sea and sky and distance—out of great spaces outside and great silence inside his prison he had drawn power, and risen step by step in the years. On the foundation of the Catholicism in which he had been brought up he had built a religion whose breadth reached right and left beyond the old measure and covered living things with the charity which suffers long and is kind; whose height stretched up into hopes undefined, of things unseen. All of this had comforted him and kept the glow of his soul undulled.

But since Battista's son, the little Battista —who had been a fisherman and not much known about the

castle—since he had gone to France with those two letters of François' sewed into his right coat sleeve, a restlessness all but unendurable had seized the prisoner. He knew as well as his jailer, tales of men thrown into dungeons coming out many years after old and broken—of men never coming out at all. No crueler tyrants than the Austrians ever ruled, and no more pitiless. And now that his letters had actually gone, now that they might actually be in the hands of the people he loved and who loved him, unrest tortured him. He counted the days of the journey, the chances of delay, he made allowances, and at last he believed, with a thrill of joy and of pain at each thought of it, that little Battista must have arrived at Vicques, that his mother and Alixe must have his letters. With that, unrest grew fiercer. They could not help him. What could they do? How could they do anything against the iron wall of Austrian power?

He said such things over to himself, even aloud, to keep down a hope which he could not bear to let grow, for fear of the anguish of its slow death. But the hope grew and was anguish in its growth. He could not help hoping, believing, that the general, that Pietro, that Alixe, with her force and energy and inventiveness, would yet save him. And

the hope and the fear racked him and he wasted away and burned as with fever.

"You are not well, my friend," said the governor. "The doctor must see you."

But François refused lightly and laughed and fell to singing an old peasant song of France which he had remembered lately; he got up on the table and droned it to an imaginary fiddle which he pretended to play after the manner of old Jacques Arné, who played for dances in Vicques.

"De tous côté's l'on dit que je suis bête—
Cela se peut! Et cependant j'en ris
Car, mes amis, si j'y perd la tête,
Je n'y perd pas pour cela, l'appetit!

Assis a table, a l'ombre dune treille,
Je bois et ris
Et gaîment je m'ecrie
En avalant bouteille sur bouteille,
A quoi sert l'esprit?"

So ran the song. And the governor was taken with a violent fancy for it. He roared at it, and sang it over in fragments till he had learned it, and then he sang it and roared again and slapped his knee; there was a droll comedy in François' ren-

dering also, not to be explained—and the count said that François must come to his rooms the next night for dinner and sing him the song again and also listen to a new one of his own.

So François was taken down the stone staircase and conducted to the two rooms which were the governor's suite. He knew them well, for he had dined, as has been said, many times with the count. But to-night he was left alone a few moments in the outer room, the living-room, while the governor was in the bedroom, and he looked about keenly with a strained attention which grew out of the suppressed hope of escape. Who knew what bit of knowledge of the castle might be vital, and who knew how soon? He noted the swords and pistols hanging on the wall, and marked a light saber whose scabbard was brightly polished as if the blade also were kept in good order. On the table he saw the flint and steel with which Count von Gersdorf lighted his pipe; he stepped to the window and bent out, scanning the wall. A stone coping, wide enough for a man's foot, but little more, ran, four feet below; ten feet beyond the window it ended in the roof of a shed, a sloping roof where a man could drop down, yes, or even climb up with ease. A man, that is, who had climbed when a boy as Fran-

çois had climbed—like a cat for certainty and lightness. But what then, when one was in the courtyard? It was walled about with a stone wall sixteen feet high; these old ancestors of Pietro, who had built this place, had planned well to keep Pietro's friend in prison.

So François, not hopeful of a sortie by that point, drew in his head from the open window and took to examining the walls of the governor's room. There were three doors—one from the hall by which he had come, one behind which he now heard the count moving in his bedroom, and a third. The count had gone through this last door one night a month before, into a dark, winding, stone staircase, and disappeared for three minutes, and brought up a bottle of wonderful wine.

"A fine stock they put down there—the Italians who ruled here for eight hundred-odd years," he had said. "I've lowered it a bit. A good spacious wine-cellar and grand old wine. You will be the better for a little." And François had watched him as he put the brass key back on the chain which hung from his belt.

At this point of memory the bedroom door opened, and the governor came out, in great good humor and ready to eat and drink as became an

Austrian soldier. The dinner was brought in, but François, for all his efforts to do his part, could not swallow food, or very little. The fever, the unrest burning in him, made it impossible. Count Gersdorf looked at him seriously when dinner was over; as yet François, talking, laughing, singing, had eaten not over half a dozen mouthfuls.

"Certainly you are not well," he said. "I think the doctor should see you." And then he nodded his head and his small eyes gleamed with a brilliant thought. "I know a medicine better than a doctor's." He stood up and his fingers were working at the chain of keys at his belt. François watched them and saw the thin, old, brass key which he slipped off. "A bottle of wine of our Italian ancestors—yours and mine, Beaupré"—the count chuckled—"that will cure you of your ills for this evening at least." He slid the key into the lock and said, half to himself, "My little brass friend never leaves the belt of Albrecht von Gersdorf except to do him a pleasure, bless him!" And then, "Hold the candle, Beaupré—well, come along down—it can do no harm and I can't manage a light and two bottles."

So François followed down the twisted, headlong, stone staircase and found himself, after rather a

long descent, holding the lamp high, gazing curiously about the walls of a large stone room lined with shelves, filled with bottles.

"A show, isn't it?" the Count von Gersdorf demanded. "Here, hold the light on this side," and he went on talking. "The wine is so old that I think it must have been stocked before the time of the last lord of the castle."

And François, holding the light, remembering the Marquis Zappi, thought so too. The count pointed to a square stone in the wall which projected slightly, very slightly.

"That is the door to a secret stock of some sort, I have always thought," he said. "Probably some wonderful old stuff saved for the coming of age of the heir, or a great event of that sort. I wish I could get at it," and he stared wistfully at the massive block. "But I can not stir it. And I don't let any one but myself down here—not I." The count turned away and they mounted the two stories of narrow steps, for the governor's rooms were on the second floor, and the staircase ran from it between walls, down underground. "The old chaps must have thought a lot of their wine to have the cellar connect directly with their own rooms—for Battista tells me these were always the rooms of the

Za—of the lords of the castle," the governor explained.

And to François, considering it, the fact seemed an odd one. And then the governor set to work drinking Pietro's wine, and little thought, as he urged it on his prisoner, how much more right to it the prisoner had than he. It was a wonderful old liquid, full of a strange dim sparkle, and of most exquisite bouquet. As he drank it François silently toasted its owner on his return to his own again. He took so little as to disgust the governor, but it put fresh life into him, and when at last he could leave the count, who was by that time more than fairly drunk, he went up to his cold prison under the roof quieter and more at peace than he had been for months.

CHAPTER XXI

A LOAF OF BREAD

THE next morning Battista came in with a manner which to the observing eye of his prisoner foretold distinctly some event. He talked more than usual, and more gruffly and loudly, but at last, after wandering about the room some minutes, all the time talking, scolding, he swooped on François and thrust a thick paper into his coat and at the same instant his heavy left hand was over François' mouth.

"Not a word," he whispered, and then— "The loaf of bread."

François, struck dumb and blind, turned hot and cold, and his shaking hand in his coat pocket clutched the letter.

But Battista prodded him with his hard forefinger. "Be careful," he muttered, and then again, "The bread"—with a sharp prod—"The loaf of bread"—and the door had clanged. Battista was gone.

A strong man, who had not been shut away from life, would likely have read the letter instantly, would instantly have examined the long round loaf lying before him. François was ill and weak and it was the first word for five years from his own people, which lay in his hand; he sat as if turned to stone, touching the paper as if that were enough; he sat for perhaps fifteen minutes.

Then suddenly a breathlessness came over him that something might happen before he could read it—this writing which, whatever it should say, meant life and death to him. Taking care not to rustle the paper, deadening the sound under his bedclothes, he read it, kneeling by the bed. It was four letters—from his mother and Alixe and the general and Pietro; but the first three were short. He felt, indeed, reading them, that no words had been written, that only the arms of the people he loved had strained about him and their faces laid against his, and that so, wordlessly, they had told him but one thing—their undying love. Weak, lonely, his intense temperament stretched to the breaking point by the last three months of fearful hope, it was more than he could bear. He put the papers against his cheek and his head dropped on the bed, and a storm of tears tore his soul and body.

But it was dangerous; he must not be off his guard; he remembered that swiftly, and with shaking fingers he opened Pietro's letter—Pietro's letter which, yellowed and faded but distinct yet, in the small clear writing, is guarded to-day with those other letters in the mahogany desk in Virginia.

"My dear brother François," the letter began, and quick tears came again at that word "brother", which said so much. "My dear brother François—this is not to tell you how I have searched for you and never forgotten you. I will tell you that when I see you. This is to tell you how to get out of that house of mine which has held you as a prisoner when you ought to have been its welcome guest. When Italy is free we will do that over; but we must get you free first. François, I am now within five miles of you—"

The man on his knees by the prison bed gasped; the letters staggered before his eyes.

"I am living on a ship, and I will explain how I got it when I see you, in a few days now, François. Every night for a week, beginning with to-night, there will be a person watching for you in Riders' Hollow, from midnight till daylight. After that we shall go away for two weeks so as to avoid giving suspicion, and then repeat the arrangement again

every night for a week. You do not know Riders' Hollow, and it is unnecessary to tell you more about it than that it is a lonely place hidden in trees, and supposed to be haunted by ghosts of men on horseback; the people about will not go there for love or money except by broad daylight.

"This is the way you are to get there. In the wine-cellar of the castle, which opens from the governor's room—in old times always the room of the lord—in that wine-cellar, on the north wall, is a square block of stone projecting slightly beyond the wall. If you press the lower corner on the left-hand side, of the stone under this, the big stone above will swing out and show an opening large enough for a man to pass. Going through, you close the door by pressing the same stone, and you then will find yourself in an underground passage which leads straight half a mile through the earth to Riders' Hollow. The passage is five hundred years old and only the family of the Zappis have ever known of it. I went through it once in my boyhood with my father, and it was in perfect condition, so I believe that it will be now. It was built with solidity—as one may believe, for if the old Zappis wanted it at all they wanted it in working order.

"Your part will be difficult, François, but I believe you can do it. You will have to get the key of the wine-cellar, or else force the lock. Can you do that? It is necessary to do it, François, for we can not get on without you, and we shall from now live only to set you free. I send you something which may be useful."

François dropped the letter and picked up the long loaf and tore it apart. There was a file in the center. As if a powerful tonic had been infused into him he felt strength and calmness pour through him. He read the letters over and over till he had them by heart; then he concealed them carefully, with the file, in his mattress. After that he sat down and concentrated his mind, with the new force working in it, on his plan.

The governor was almost certain to have him down to dinner again in two or three days; it was a pity that while he was there, all but on the spot, he could not possess himself of the key and escape. He thought over one or two plans on that basis, but they all shipwrecked on the fact that the guards were accustomed to take him back to his room at eleven, and that, failing notice from the governor, they would certainly come to find out why if they were not called. That would start the pursuit; he

must have the night clear. So he unwillingly let go of the great advantage of his own presence in the governor's room, so near the scene of action, and planned otherwise. With infinite forethought, with an eye to every contingency possible to imagine, he planned, and when the notice came, two days later, that the Count von Gersdorf wished him to dine with him that night, François' heart leaped madly but exultantly, for he was ready.

Never had the young Frenchman been more entertaining, more winning to his tyrant than to-night, but the excitement of what was before him made it almost out of the question to eat the count's dinner. As before, the count prescribed old wine as a tonic, and took François with him to get it. To-night there were three bottles brought up—the count was preparing to drink hard. And François had some trouble in not drinking with him; but he kept up his end with singing and acting, with a dance or two out of the peasant repertoire of the Jura, with a mock drill of an awkward squad at Saint-Cyr, with clever imitations of the few people whom he had seen about the castle, Battista's gruffness and mangled German words, and the sniffling mixed with grandiloquence of one of the guards; finally he grew daring and imitated the governor's superior

officer who had visited the prison six months ago and had seen François among the others. François, with his body bent out, and a fat waddle, and an improvised eye-glass and a pursy short-breathed manner, spoke of the governor severely, puffing at him between sentences, reproving him, among other things, for having prisoners dine with him.

And the governor roared with delight, for this man was his rival and it did his soul good to see him made ridiculous. He roared, and drank to the imitation, and the imitation rebuked his levity throatily, till the governor roared and drank again and shouted for more. And François, excited, exhilarated, did more; and still the governor drank as he acted. And the vaudeville went on. So that when the guard came at eleven the count was lying across the sofa, too tipsy to get to bed alone, and François had to wait, pretending to be heavy with wine himself, while the two soldiers put the governor to bed.

At last he was taken up-stairs between them, leaning on them limply; at last his door clanged shut; he listened to the footsteps of the two dying away down the stone hall, down the staircase; then swiftly he drew out the file and the letters from his mattress; he hid the papers, wrapped tight in their

oilskin cover, in his coat lining; he set to work with the file to finish iron bars already three-quarters filed through. That was done and with fingers that seemed to work as fast, as intelligently as his brain, he tore the bedclothes into stout strips and tied them together with square knots which would not slip, and tied knots in the line at intervals of a few feet which might keep a man's fingers from slipping. He had to guess how long the rope must be, but the bedclothes were all used and the rope was many yards—it must serve. He put the file, with two candle ends which he had saved, in his pocket; he made one end of the strip fast to an untouched iron bar of his window; he weighted the other end; then he looked about a moment, half to see if all of his small resources had been remembered, half in a glance of farewell to a place where he had passed hours never to be forgotten.

With that he vaulted to the window-ledge and took the first knot in a firm grip and let himself out into the dark still night. His feet hung in the air, his hand slid fast—fast—down that poor ladder of torn stuff; the die was cast; he was going to things unknown; he had taken a desperate chance and might not go back. And he slipped down, down, from knot to knot. Suddenly he came to the last

knot; he had fastened a bit of wood there so that he might know when he got to the end. What was this? It certainly was the last knot; the bit of wood scraped his hand as he held it; but his feet did not touch ground.

There he hung, swaying in blackness, not knowing how far he might be above the earth, not knowing what to do. Only a moment, for instantly he knew that in any case he could not go back, if he would, up that slight swinging rope; he must drop, whatever happened. He bent his knees ready for the fall and let go. With a shock he landed and rolled, bruised and out of breath, but not injured; he looked up and in the dimness saw the last knot with its bit of wood swinging in air twelve feet or so from the ground.

But he had no time given him to consider this point, for at that second, at the far end of the closed yard a door opened, a blaze of light poured out, and a squad of six soldiers stepped from the castle, torches in the hands of the foremost. François dropped, crouching into the shadows against the wall, but his heart grew sick as he realized the futility of this. The soldiers were coming straight toward him.

With that, a gleam on a brighter surface than

the ground met his sight, below the level of the ground. His eyes, searching the darkness, made out a great butt of water, sunken by the castle wall. Instantly he slid into it, up to his neck. It was not quite full, and his head did not show in the shadows of the inside. The blaze of the torches swept close, brighter, as François, shivering in the cold water, glued himself to the dark side; the blaze of the torches waved, shadowy, gigantic, across the water and the castle wall; he heard the soldiers speak in short deep words; it was like an evil dream, and it slipped past, torches and dark-swinging shadows and heavy tread of men and stern voices, like a dream. The heavy door shut, the lights were gone, everything was still.

More dead than alive, François dripped from the water-butt. The hardest part of his night's job, the part that needed all his strength of body and brain, was immediately before him, and he stood nerveless, with clicking teeth, as limp as the traditional drowned rat. A moment he stood so, utterly discouraged, without confidence, without hope. Then with his trembling lips he framed words, words familiar to him for years, and with that, in a shock, he felt strength and courage rising in him like a slow calm flood. It was not less a miracle because

there was no sign in the heavens, no earthquake or lightning; it was not less a miracle because many people living now might tell of a like help in fearful need. As it was once a long time ago, the water of his blood was changed into wine. So the prisoner stood in the courtyard in the blackness of midnight and found himself ready.

He groped his way to the shed he had seen from the governor's window; with his old boyish agility he scrambled up its sloping roof and felt for the coping he had noticed—the coping wide enough for a man's foot; he had found it; he had found a water-pipe above to help him stand on it; he was on the coping, face flat to the wall, working his way with infinite delicate care to the window of the governor. He never knew how long that part took; it seemed a great while, though not many feet lay between the shed and the window. Then he felt the stone sill of the window; his hand crept up; it was open—wide open. With a strong pull he had swung himself over and stood in the dark, in the governor's bedroom.

Stood and listened, hardly daring for the first instant to draw the long breath he sorely needed. Then he smiled. No necessity for that caution at least. The governor was snoring a heavy aggressive snore

which would have drowned most noises. François stood quiet till his eyes had grown accustomed to the shadows, and then they searched about quickly. Ah! there they were, the governor's clothes. On a chair by his bed. With wary steps he stole across. He lifted off one or two things and suddenly there was a jingle.

"Ah!" growled the governor and flung out his hand, and the snore came to a full stop.

The hand searched the darkness a second; all but touched that of François, then fell limply, the head turned away, with a deep sigh. Like a statue François stood, frozen to the floor, and dared not look at the figure stirring in the bed, for fear his gaze might awake the sleeper. For he slept; the sound of the keys had only jarred some chord in his uneasy dream. Long minutes after the snoring was in full progress again François waited, and then with careful fingers he clasped the entire bunch of keys softly and carried them into the next room.

There was a low light there, on the writing-table. François slipped the thin, old, brass key which he knew off from the bunch; he glanced about quickly and found the flint and steel on its table and put them in his pocket; he took down that small saber, with its well-polished scabbard, and buckled it about

himself; then a thought came to him. A sheet of paper lay on the governor's writing-table as if he had been about to write a letter; pen and ink were ready. The prisoner dropped into the governor's chair and wrote:

"My dear Count, I can not run away without leaving a good-by for you and a word of thanks for the kindness you have shown me. Be sure I shall not forget our evenings together and shall be glad when I hear of your promotion, as I am sure I shall hear. I heartily hope I am not going to make trouble for you. But I have to go—you will understand that. With a thousand thanks again I am, Count, your grateful prisoner—François Beaupré." And under the signature by an after inspiration he wrote:

"De tous côte's l'on dit que je suis bête—
Cela se peut! Et cependant j'en ris."

Still the count snored. François, alert, stood and listened as he folded the note carefully and laid it under a weight on the table. Then he tempted Providence no longer. He slid the battered, bright, old, brass key softly into the lock, let himself into the dark stairway, relocked the door on the inside,

groped his way painfully down the steep stairs into the wine-cellar, and when he felt a level floor under his feet struck a light with the governor's flint and steel. He lighted one of his candle ends. The wine-cellar, which he had left only two hours before, seemed almost homelike; it lacked the governor, that was all. He crossed to the projecting stone in the north wall, and pressed the corner of the stone below. Nothing happened. Hurriedly he pressed it again, harder, but the cold even surface of the wall stared him blankly in the face. Again he pushed—with no result. A sickness came over him. Was all his labor and peril to go for nothing? Was he to be caught again and thrust back, this time into some far worse dungeon? How had he dared to hope! The entrance was closed, overgrown, the masonry had grown solid with years and dampness.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PEASANT GUIDE

HE flashed out the saber and desperately he slid it this way and that about the great stone, trying to find a crack, something to loosen, something that would give. And while he worked in a fever, in a chill, he remembered Pietro's letter.

Then he set down the candle end on a shelf and with trembling fingers drew off his coat and drew out the hidden papers. The wet from his bath in the water-butt had stained them a little, but only a little, for they were carefully wrapped in the bit of oilskin in which they had come. He unfolded the letter.

"If you will press the lower corner on the left-hand side," Pietro said—"the lower corner!"

And he had been concentrating all his efforts, all his despair, on the upper corner. When it is a question of life and death a man is superhumanly strong and quick sometimes, but he is also sometimes forgetful. It is an exciting and confusing thing, likely,

to be working for life and liberty after five years of imprisonment. François pushed the lower left-hand corner and like magic the great block above swung out. With his lighted candle end in his hand he slipped through and turned and swung back the door into place and turned again and faced blackness. Narrow, low, cold blackness. Quickly enough, however, with good courage, with his heart thumping out a song of hope, which he had kept down sternly till now, he walked, at times stooping low as he must because of the descent, down the secret road of the old Zappis. His candle held forward, he could see a few feet ahead, but all he could see was huge blocks of rough stone, green with mold, water dripping between them. The air he breathed was heavy and thick; through his wet clothes he felt a chill as of the grave. But what mattered the road, when the road led to freedom?

Suddenly it came to him that the passage might be blocked. It was years since Pietro had been through it; some of the stones might have fallen—it would take very little to close so narrow a way. With an anxiety which was physical pain, with breathless eagerness now, he hurried on. He had to stop to light his second candle; again he hurried on. Would the end never come? Was any mistake pos-

sible? With that he stumbled against something and fell, and the candle flew from his hand and was put out; with a hoarse groan he threw out an arm to steady himself, to rise; his hand went through a yielding, prickly mass; a glimmer came in past it—light—the end!

Pushing, crashing, staggering through, he came into a strange place. It was as if a giant had taken a huge spoon and scooped out the top of the earth deep, very deep. All of this great hollow was filled with trees and tangled undergrowth. It was full of vague shadows in the glimmer of earliest dawn. François, standing there sobbing, ghastly with paleness, with matted hair and wild-staring eyes and gasping mouth and wet torn clothes, was a fit demon for the haunted spot. He saw nothing, no one; with that there was a soft snapping of twigs and a movement in the darkness farthest from him; a movement toward him. Tottering he crawled to meet it; in another second the shadows had shaped into figures—a peasant boy on a horse, leading another horse.

Then he stood close to them, and the boy, leaning over without a word put something into his hand, and François, swaying with exhaustion, saw that it was a flask. He took a long swallow of cognac

and his chilled blood leaped, and with that he had caught the bridle from the lad and was in the saddle.

Silently, without a word spoken, they climbed the shadowy slope under the overhanging trees of Riders' Hollow. Silently, fast, they rode through the pale darkness, through the slow-coming day, down wooded roads, across fields, always toward the sea. Steadily the day came; now they were galloping most of the time, only pulling in to let the horses breathe going up a hill, or to guard them from stumbling down one.

In the shadows of trees, in a lonely lane, the peasant boy stopped his horse suddenly and made a short gesture toward the flask sticking out of François' coat pocket. His strength was going again; it was exactly the right moment. Another swallow of brandy and he rode on with fresh courage. But something in the gesture of the peasant boy; something about his seat in the saddle, about the touch of his hands on the rein, gave François a curious undefined shock. In the growing daylight he turned toward the silent rider. The coat collar was up and the broad-brimmed soft hat drawn down. The slim figure, outlined against the cool pink vastness of the morning sky was clad like an ordinary young peasant—yet! There was a poise, a sure grace,

which seemed unlike a peasant, which seemed like—

"Have we far to go?" François demanded suddenly in French.

The head turned swiftly; black exaggerated lashes lifted and under them were the blue eyes he knew.

"Alixe."

He cried it out loud, reckless, forgetting everything. But she did not forget. In an instant her hand was on his mouth, and she was whispering in terror.

"François, dear François, be careful. We are not safe yet. We have a village to ride through—see, there is a house. It is almost time for them to be awake. Ride fast. It is two miles yet."

They were racing again over the soft ground, the horses' unshod feet making little noise, and François' heart was playing mad music. No need now of cognac. Then they were galloping down the sand of a lonely beach, and with that there was a little group of people and a boat drawn up; and they had pulled in the horses, and François felt himself lifted off like a child and lying like a very little, worn-out child in the general's arms; and the general was crying, swearing, hugging him without shame. Pietro was there; Pietro was rubbing the

thin hands in a futile useless sort of way, and holding them by turns to his face. Alixe, her peasant hat off now, bent over them, lovelier than ever before, not minding her boy's dress, and smiled at him, wordless. There was a huge man also who took the horses, and François wondered if he had heard aright that Alixe called him "little Battista". Wondering very much at everything, the voices grew far away and the faces uncertain, and he decided that it was without doubt a dream and that Battista would unlock the door shortly and bring in his breakfast. And with that he knew nothing more till he awoke in a boat.

CHAPTER XXIII

REST AND SAFETY

HE heard the sound of waves outside, the slipping of ropes, the flapping of sails. He kept his eyes closed a few minutes, not daring to open them. There was a blessed atmosphere of rest and safety about him; he feared to find it unreal if he opened his eyes. He feared to find himself in the straw of a dungeon. He listened attentively—surely sails and cordage and slapping waves—and then he was aware of the motion of a boat. Cautiously he peered from under half-closed lids. A small room, a boat's cabin; nothing to tell if he were in the hands of friends or of enemies. Yet—was it a dream that he had seen the general and Pietro, had ridden long miles in the dawn with Alixe? Such dreams come to comfort poor prisoners—he knew that. But at that point his eyes flashed wide and his arms flew out. Something more had crept into that circumscribed field of his vision—a

quiet figure sitting in a dark corner of the little room.

"Alixe!"

Not a dream, not another world; just the close sweetness of her face bent over him, of her hands holding his, of her courageous soft voice speaking to him caressingly as if he were a child, as if he were dear to her.

"You must not talk, François. After a while—not yet. You are very weak."

So he smiled and lay happily, clutching her hand with his long, hot, shaking fingers, like a bird's claws for thinness. But a hunted beast may not rest absolutely till it knows if the bloodhounds are distanced. The cavernous eyes turned on Alixe with a question, and she understood.

"You want to know if you are safe, dear François?" and she stroked his hand. "Yes. You are on the boat of little Battista—Luigi's boat it is now. Little Battista gave it to Luigi when he went to France, and Luigi is his friend and also one of Pietro's people. You will hear about that later. We are going now to the harbor of Commachio, sixty miles from Castelforte. You are to be put on board a big ship there, and taken away to safety. Yet you are safe now—rest in that, for it is true."

And François drew a deep trembling breath and, holding Alixe's hand, fell asleep.

When he awoke next his eyes opened swiftly and turned to the corner where Alixe had sat. It was not Alixe there this time, but the general. And the general came and sat down by him and patted his hand and swore softly at him saying, *"sabre de bois,"* and *"nom d'un chien,"* and such things; and called him his own boy, and told him how his mother and father were well and confident of his rescue; yes, and told him also how it was Alixe who had waited every night for him in Riders' Hollow, and would let no one take her place.

"It was the best arrangement," said the general. "For Pietro is too well known—it would have been unsafe for you both. And I am so much the old officer that I should have been remarked instantly; also I am heavy in the saddle. But Alixe passed easily for some peasant lad with a led horse for his master; also she rides light and so could save the horses, which was important, for only two horses could we have and they were to be in service one knew not how long."

François asked a feeble question.

"Ah—Pietro. He is a fine sort, our Pietro. They adore him, here in his country. There is a farmer

back there who owed life and home to the Zappi
to Pietro's father and mother. The horses wer
his. They were brought after dark and returne
before sunrise, but it was far, and hard on th
beasts. And a risk for the good Giuseppi; but h
was glad to serve Pietro; they adore Pietro."

Quite malapropos, the general leaned over at th
point and stretched out a heavy hand and patte
François' pale cheek and smiled and said, as he ha
said so many years ago on that morning when th
news came of the marquis' death, "It is a goo
thing to have a son, my François." And Françoi
being fed shortly after, fell asleep again like a tir
baby.

And the next time he awoke it was with a ne
feeling; with a desire and a hope to live. Pietro s
watching him and brought him warm milk and he
his head up as he drank it, like a woman. Then,
quiet slow tones, he explained all the puzzle whic
François had by now begun to wonder over.
seemed that just before little Battista had brough
François' letter to Vicques, Pietro had received an
other unexpected letter, from a Colonel Hampto
in Virginia, whose estate lay next the six thousan
acres of land which the Marquis Zappi had boug
fifteen years before. Colonel Hampton wrote wi

Holding Alixe's hand, François fell asleep.

two requests. The first was that the Marquis Zappi should come to Virginia, or send some one with authority to look after his property. The land was going to rack and ruin for want of management; the uncontrolled slaves on the place were demoralizing to the neighborhood. Colonel Hampton had done what he could, but he had not the power of a master, and moreover he was busy with his own large estate. The marquis should come or send a qualified agent and at once.

The next object of the letter was to ask that the marquis should receive and entertain the nephew of Colonel Hampton, Mr. Henry Hampton, who, sailing on Colonel Hampton's ship, the *Lovely Lucy*, would bring this letter to the marquis. The ship would go first to England and discharge there her cargo of tobacco, and after that it was to be at the service of young Mr. Hampton, to visit such countries of Europe as he might choose, for six months. Mr. Hampton had many letters to people in England, but none elsewhere, and Colonel Hampton would be obliged if the marquis would receive him at his estate of Castelforte and let him see something of Italy from that point of vantage. The marquis might then, if he thought good, return to Virginia in the *Lovely Lucy*, and either set matters on a firm

enough footing to be left, or else—which the colone considered the better plan—stay with them and be come a country gentleman of Virginia. The colone had heard that there had been political trouble i Italy, but hoped that at this time the country wa at peace and the marquis comfortably established i his own castle.

All this the young marquis, an exile of five year from his native land, had read at the château o Vicques. He had considered deeply as to what h might do about Carnifax, his estate in Virginia. H could not go himself, for he was in close connectio with the work of Italian patriots outside and inside of Italy; with Mazzini in London; with others i other places. And he did not know any one whom he could send.

So the matter stood when the big little Battist had brought François' letter to Vicques. And when Alixe had appealed to him to take François' libera tion on his shoulders, with the thought of the secre passage and the vaguely outlined plan of escape ha come to him the recollection of Colonel Hampton' letter and the long sea voyage to Virginia.

So when Mr. Henry Hampton landed at Calais a tall and very handsome and very silent youn man took quiet possession of him and told him tha

he was the Marquis Zappi and that Mr. Hampton was to go with him to the château of Vicques in the Jura. There was a certain gentle force about this young marquis which made opposition to his expressed wish something like banging one's head against a stone wall. Mr. Henry Hampton had planned going direct to Paris, but he went to Vicques. And on the journey down the Marquis Zappi opened out a plan which richly rewarded him for his pliability. Mr. Hampton had somewhat clearer ideas on Italian politics than his uncle; he knew enough to detest the Austrians and to have a keen sympathy for the long, heroic, losing fight—so far losing—of those devoted men who were counting their lives as nothing for a united Italy. The scheme of helping to rescue a prisoner out of an Austrian fortress was an adventure such as made his eyes dance. Mr. Hampton was twenty-one and full of romance, romance as yet ungratified. So, Pietro told François, this long explanation over, the *Lovely Lucy* was anchored at an unimportant island outside the port for which they were bound, and François and the others were to go on board and set sail promptly for some port of France. There the general, Alixe, Pietro and little Battista were to be put ashore, and François was to sail across to

Virginia with Mr. Hampton and take possession for Pietro of his American estates.

François, lying in bed with his eyes glowing like lanterns, listened. But as his friend finished he broke out, with a sharp pain in his voice.

"Pietro! I want to see my mother."

And Pietro was silent, laying a quiet hand over the unsteady one. Without a word he sat so and let the sick man think. The line of red which came into the pale cheeks told that he was thinking intensely, and at last, with a shivering sigh which went to the other's heart:

"You are right, Pietro," he said. "It is a wonderful plan for a broken man. It is like you to do everything right without a word said. The sea voyage, the healthy life in Virginia—that ought to make a man of me again soon, ought it not, Pietro?"

Pietro could not speak as he looked at the wrecked figure, but he nodded cheerfully.

"As for your place, I'll have that in order in a month, and in a year it will be a model for Virginia and then I'll come home."

Pietro smiled.

"Come home and fight for the Prince—for our Prince Louis. Do you remember that afternoon at the château, Pietro, and the strange boy, and how

he fascinated us and how—" the weak voice stopped at every few syllables, but slipped on again cheerfully. The familiar charm of the boy François was strong as he talked. "And how he was not to be frightened by any danger of an old wall—" and François stopped, smiling.

"And how you saved him," Pietro added.

"That was a chance," said François quickly. "But, Pietro, do you remember how Alixe turned on you, because I had done it? Droll little Alixe!"

"She always scorned me because I was not wonderful like you, François. You were always the hero," Pietro said gently, and pressed the skeleton hand under his own.

François' eyes blazed up at him then as they had done so often in boyhood. "Not that, Pietro. You do not understand. It was because Alixe wished always to see you first. I was older and had a certain quickness—she wanted you to have my poor facility as well as all of your own gifts."

Pietro smiled his kind quiet smile. "My François, I have no gifts. And if Alixe is more proud of you it is right, for you are a pride to all of us and I am the last to grudge one particle of honor or love to you. François"—Pietro's deep voice stopped, and then he went on in his straightforward,

simple way—"François, it is not possible for me to tell you how glad I am to have you, my brother, back from the dead."

And weak, nerve-wrecked François, holding tight to Pietro's hand, turned his face to the wall and cried.

Now that the end of effort was over, the strain of the long years showed their effects in a collapse: the stretched chord had fallen loose, relaxed as if it might never make music again. When the time came to leave the sail-boat of Luigi and go aboard the *Lovely Lucy,* the effort was too much for the man who, two nights before, had shown the nerve and agility of an acrobat. When he must leave the boat and make the change, he fainted, and, wrapped in a blanket, ghastly white, unconscious, the little Battista carried his light weight up the ladder of the American ship.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SACRIFICE

YOUNG Henry Hampton, thrilled to the core at this drama, bent over him, as Battista laid him on the deck, and looked up anxiously at Pietro.

"Is he living?" he asked.

He was living, though for an hour or two the devoted friends who cared for him doubted if they had not got him back only to lose him. But that last effort of the change to the ship being past, when consciousness came again he grew strong more rapidly.

"I thought—the Austrians—would nab me—as I came aboard," he whispered, smiling gaily as he gasped the words to Alixe. "It was—firm in my mind."

And Alixe laughed at him and told him that they were far out on the Adriatic now, safe under the American flag, and the Austrians left two hundred miles behind.

"Even if they had—nabbed me," whispered François, "those two days with you would have paid."

And Alixe shuddered a little and told him to go to sleep and stop thinking of Austrians, for they were out of his life now forever.

"My Seigneur," said François next day when the general took his turn at sitting by his bed, "may I ask a question?"

"Any question in the world, François, my son," the general growled at him, as if the tender words were a defiance to an enemy.

François hesitated. "About Alixe and Pietro."

The general shook his head. "Ah that! That I can not tell you, François. Sometimes I believe that I have been mistaken, that—" the general as he stopped looked oddly at François and smiled. "Sometimes I believe that even I, even Gaspard Gourgaud, might make a mistake in trying to play the good God, and arranging lives. That might be—yes. In any case I can not tell."

François, thinking deeply, hazarded another question. "He loves her?"

"I believe so, indeed," said the general. "He cares most to be with us—with her. Ah yes, I have no doubt that he loves her. But why it goes no farther—*sapristi!* It is beyond me—that! I would

knock their foolish heads together, me—but that is not convenient."

"Does she love Pietro?"

"*Mon Dieu!* How can a mere man say that? She is a woman. I do not know—not in the least," the general exploded at him.

"But Pietro loves her?" François asked again, his wistful smiling eyes searching the general's face.

"Yes—I am sure of it."

And François smiled.

"No one could help it," he said half to himself.

In a day more little Battista came into François' cabin and put clothes on him and wrapped him like a mummy in coats and rugs, and carried him in his arms up on deck, and there laid him in a hammock on the sunny side of the ship. And the salt air blew on his face and he gulped it in, and by and by Alixe brought a chair and sat by him and read to him, and François lay quiet and wondered if heaven could be any improvement on this.

Then, after a while, the book lay on the girl's knee, and they fell to talking. She told him about his mother and his father at the *Ferme du Val,* and the brothers and sisters, grown up now, and some of them in homes of their own. She told him about Pierre's new wife, who had been Jeanne Courtois, of

Beaulieu, and how much they all liked her, and how she and Pierre lived at the farm and were to have it one day after the older François and Claire had gone. About Tomas and his fine big shop at Delesmontes she told him, and how little Lucie had married the school-teacher, and had a pretty house in a street he knew well.

Then she told him about the animals—how the great gray horses he had known still drew the golden loads of hay in from the fields, with their grandchildren drawing the next wagon. How the ducks in the pond were hundreds now and were sent to the market, and made much money for Le François. And how that old gift of his in choosing oxen was making a fortune for him—only now he never played cards coming home from market day,—or at any other time. In fact, the gentle mother had made one stern rule for her family—no one of them ever played since that time a game of chance.

And then Alixe told François about the castle. She told him about Jean Phillippe Moison and his brazen curiosity in staying to hear the prisoner's letter, and his address of thanks to the Almighty when he knew that François was alive. And she told him about little old Coq—now an aged horse of twenty-five years, spoiled and naughty, but yet

beloved and used only for his own health's sake; she told how Coq would run to her for sugar and burrow his bold nose into her coat pocket, snorting impatiently; and how he had thrown Moison's little girl over his head two months before as he used to throw all of them.

So, on that long, bright, calm morning at sea François lay in the hammock and watched the million little waves glisten and break for unknown miles over the sunlit water, and listened to the voice he loved best in the world, as it told him of those others whom he loved also, and of the places dear to him; and he wondered that he had indeed come through the long nightmare of prison to this happiness.

"Mr. Hampton has been talking to me about Virginia; it must be a beautiful country," said Alixe. "I should love the free friendly life of those great domains. I believe I could leave France and Vicques for such a country as that, where there are no political volcanoes on top of which one must live. With us it is always plotting and secrecy. Always a war to look back on or to look forward to. I should like to go to Virginia."

"But," said François, with his great eyes glowing, "the war one now looks forward to in France will be short and glorious. And after that will be peace,

for there will be a Bonaparte ruling, and that means strength and good government."

"How you believe in the Great Captain and in his blood," and Alixe smiled down at the pale face on fire with its lifelong enthusiasm.

"One must," said François simply, and paused, and went on. "For me—you know, Alixe, how it is. How the star of the Bonapartes has always seemed to be my star! I believe that. I believe that my life is tied to that house. Napoleon was more than human to my mind, and his touch set me aside for his uses in my cradle."

"And made you a Chevalier," Alixe considered. "That was a true accolade, François. You would have a right to that title under another Bonaparte."

"I believe so, Alixe."

"And my father believes it. So you must hurry and get well and come back to France and be fit for work when the Prince needs you, Chevalier Beaupré. My father has told you that a movement is preparing? He is reckless, my father, and it troubles me. It might be unsafe for him to live in France if his part in these plots were known."

"Then you could come to Virginia—to Carnifax," and François smiled.

But Alixe flushed. "That is Pietro's estate, not

ours," she said quickly; and then she rose and bent over the sick boy. "I must go to my father now," she said, and caught his pitiful hands suddenly in both hers. "But oh! François, I wish I could tell you how it changes all the world to have you back again"—and she was gone.

François, trembling with a rapture he could not quiet, lay, not stirring, because he feared to break the spell of the touch of her hands; feeling within him a rebel hope that yet he would not let take hold of him. Could it be? Was it true? Did she care for him and not for Pietro? Was that the reason that in all these years she and Pietro were still only sister and brother? Yet, he caught and choked the thought. Even then he had no right, he could not, would not tell her what she was to him. He would be Pietro's friend always as he had promised long ago; more, a thousand times more now, when Pietro had given back to him freedom and life and hope. Pietro loved her; she would come to love Pietro in time; he would never take her from him, even if he could. What was his own happiness compared to that of these two so close and dear? And also it was a bitter bliss to sacrifice his joy for that of his seigneur, for the man who had given him everything. To François, smil-

ing out at the sunny ocean, giving up the love of his life, came that other blessedness of renunciation, and he was happy.

The next day the general and Alixe and Pietro and the little Battista were put ashore in France, and the *Lovely Lucy* sailed on with young Henry Hampton and François to Virginia.

CHAPTER XXV

A SOCIAL CRISIS

ON a day the ship sailed into a splendid roadstead, big enough to hold the ships of half the world. Then into a wide flashing river, the James River, four or five miles wide down there at its mouth. And up and up and up the bright river, the narrowing river, between its low green banks, with now and again a glimpse of a large house and of gardens and lawns green with June, as one sailed past.

Harry Hampton told François who lived in them as they went by—Harrisons and Carters and Byrds and Randolphs—strange-sounding, difficult, English names in the ear of the Frenchman. Young Mr. Hampton knew them all, it seemed; many of them were his cousins; François listened, surprised, interested, to the word picture which the Virginian unconsciously drew, as he talked of every-day happenings, of a society and a way of living quite different from any the Frenchman had ever heard of.

With that they were in sight of Roanoke House—one might see the roofs of the buildings over the trees—Harry Hampton pointed it out with a touch of excitement in his grave manner. Then, as one slipped along the sparkling water, there was a sharp bend in the stream, and as they turned it the large silvery green slope of the lawn lay before them, with its long wharf and barges lying at the water-side, and a ship unloading its return cargo from England.

"It is the *Sea Lady*," called young Hampton. "She is in before us—and she sailed so long after."

He made a quick movement forward with his pathetic broken step—for this only son of the Hampton family was a cripple.

There were people gathering on the lawn, negroes drawn up in line; the women in bright-colored turbans, men and women both showing white teeth as they grinned with the pleasure and the excitement of watching the ship come in. Then a white light figure ran down the broad greenness, and a girl stood, golden curls on her shoulders, a straw hat with blue ribbons tying down some of the golden curls, but not all—stood and watched and waved an eager friendly hand.

"It is my cousin Lucy," Harry Hampton said,

and François, looking at him, saw his eyes fixed on her intently.

In a few minutes more, leaving the ship with his halting careful step, François saw him kiss her cousinly—yet it seemed not altogether cousinly—and with that he was saying a word about "My new friend, the Chevalier Beaupré," and the girl's quick hand-clasp and the warm welcome in her voice of honey, made François feel as if a place in her friendship had been waiting for him always.

Then, from back of her, from somewhere, towered suddenly a tall man, with large features, and first seized Harry Hampton's hand and then turned to the stranger with the same air of entire pleasure and hopitality.

"My nephew's friend is welcome at Roanoke House," he said, and François, with his few words of English, understood enough to be warmed to the soul at his first contact with southern hospitality.

"It is my uncle, Colonel Hampton," Harry's voice was explaining.

They would not hear of his going to Carnifax—not for days, not for a month; why should he go at all?—Colonel Hampton asked. If he were to be only a year or two in Virginia, why trouble to set up housekeeping alone in that big house, when Roan-

oke House was here and in order, and only too glad to keep him. So François for a week or two stayed. And found himself, shortly, a notability. Harry Hampton, his boyish ambition for adventure and daring denied every personal outlet, because of that accident in babyhood which had started him in life hopelessly lame, was as proud of his salvage from the Austrian bird of prey as if François' record had been his own. Much more frankly proud, for he could talk about it, and did. Alixe had told him a great deal, and the episode of the headlong rescue of Prince Louis Napoleon, the capture and imprisonment and final theatrical escape, went like wild-fire, about the countryside, and stirred all the romance of the warm-blooded southerners. Every house wanted the hero to break bread, and under young Harry's proud wing François went gladly to meet all these friends of his friend. As the general had said years ago, his simplicity struck the finest note of sophisticated high breeding; moreover, he had lived with high-bred people in more than one country; the aristocrats of Virginia were delighted with his young nobleman, as they thought him—with his charm of manner and his stirring history, with the lines of suffering still in his thin face and the broad lock of gray—the badge of that suffering—in his dark

hair; with the quaint foreign accent too, and the unexpectedness in the turns of his rapidly increasing English.

François accepted the title of Chevalier, which Alixe had given him in speaking to Henry Hampton, and which Henry Hampton used in introducing him to the noblesse of the South, partly because he believed it his, partly because it pleased the child-like French vanity in him. He had no thought of claiming a social position not his own; no thought that a social position might count with these hospitable new friends. Names known in American history were spoken at the dinner-table of those days in Virginia.

"It is the Chevalier Beaupré, Mr. Clay," Lucy Hampton answered a question from a tall man with a great domed head.

She was placed next him at a dinner at Martin's Brandon, the old home of the Harrisons. "The young man with the band of white in his hair—it is the Chevalier Beaupré—of France. He is staying at Roanoke." And she went on eagerly to give a quick summary of the history of this stranger, whose personality attracted the interest of so distinguished a person. As she talked, Henry Clay, of Kentucky, bending to listen to her sliding speech,

watched, under his deep brow, the man across the table.

"It is a good deal of history for a man of twenty-six," Clay considered, and with that his resonant assured voice lifted across the talk of the dinner-table. "Chevalier Beaupré!"

François turned swiftly, and his great dark eyes met the piercing look of the great statesman. "*Moi? oui,* Monsieur"—he dropped back into his own tongue at a sudden touch, always.

Careless of the silence which fell on the long table, Henry Clay went on in his clear masterful tones. "Miss Hampton tells me that you are of the Bonapartist side of French politics. That interests me. I should like to get an idea of the strength of that faction in France. You come, I suppose, of a Bonapartist family. Was your house royalist before the revolution? And in what part of France did your lands lie?"

The twenty odd people, leaders of the Virginian aristocracy, bent forward from this side and that of the table to hear the reply. It came easily, promptly, in the deep, clear, young voice, which they had all begun to know.

"But, Monsieur—I have no house. I am a peasant. My father holds a farm from the Seigneur

of Vicques, in the valley of the Jura. It is all the land we have." The exquisite radiant smile of the child of the cottage of La Claire shone across the silver and glass of the glittering dinner-table of Brandon, unconscious of the startled eyes staring all one way in that dramatic silence.

Human nature is mostly good enough to ring true to the touch of truth. It is also quick to be kindly when kindliness is the lead of greatness. Clay, of Kentucky, was genuinely great. He bowed with a gentler courtesy than common to the bright steady face opposite him.

"Sir," he said, "it is finer to have a heroic record than to have family and lands. I took it for granted you had everything, for you seem a darling of the gods. I congratulate you that the realities which men strive for during long lives—greatness of spirit and greatness of action—have come to you at twenty-six. May I look forward to some talk with you after dinner on French politics?"

And François, answering eagerly, with the pleasure in pleasing which was part of his magic, did not suspect that he had passed a crisis. Missing by a hair's-breadth a social shipwreck, which he would not have realized or regarded, the Chevalier Beaupré stood hereafter in Virginia society on his own

feet, a peasant born, yet a lion. People wondered how he was a chevalier, but not even Harry Hampton cared to ask him, and it was a tale which lay too deep in his heart to be told often.

CHAPTER XXVI

CAPTAIN OF THE TROOP

AND now he had left Roanoke, and was living in the great old house on Pietro's land, the old house which had been lived in a hundred years before Pietro's father had bought it, the old house in which grandchildren of Pietro live to-day.

Something in his odd broken English, something in his vivacity and energy, something in the warmth of the heart which the poor souls felt in him—none quicker than negroes to feel a heart—fascinated the slaves who fell to his unaccustomed management. He had met Henry Clay and the proud aristocrats of Virginia as men and women, and given them the best of himself; he met these thick-lipped, dim-souled, black people no otherwise, and gave them the same. By the crystal truth in him the first had been vanquished, and it happened not differently with these other human beings. Pietro's mishandled property grew orderly month by month; François, in the saddle most of the time, riding from end to

end of the plantation, found his hands full and his work interesting, and his health and strength coming back—though that was a slower progress.

The people who do most are likely to be the people who can do a thing more. Young Henry Hampton, ruled out of the larger part of his natural pleasures by that stern by-law of nature, which had made him lame, appealed to François' sympathy every day more deeply. In his devotion to his discovery, his brand from the Austrian burning, his own peculiar friend—all this Harry considered François to be—the boy was very much at Carnifax, and the older man, hardly more than a boy himself, came to know the suffering it meant to a strong and active young animal, to drag a ball and chain. The sort of lad who would have led others at fencing, wrestling, swimming, running—at every sport—he had to sit outside, and with aching heart and muscles tingling to be at work, to watch his friends. He was generous and cheered on the others; he was reserved and never spoke of himself; people, even his own people had come to take his lameness for granted, had forgotten that the trial was always a fresh one to him. But François understood. There were no words spoken between them, but François, full of warm friendliness

toward this boy who had helped him back to life, turned things over in his mind and found a scheme which seemed to promise pleasure for young Hampton—which seemed besides to be good practise for the work to which the gaze of François looked forward steadily, through and beyond all this temporary living—the work of fighting for the Bonapartes.

The one thing which the lad could do was riding. "Henry," François spoke, as the two trotted together down a shady lane of the plantation on the way to the far fields where negroes worked in the autumn sunlight, "what would you think of organizing a mounted troop of militia?"

The boy's face flamed with excitement. What would he think of it? He would think it glorious, wonderful, half a dozen big adjectives.

There were many young men in the neighborhood; all of them rode; none of them had enough to do; François had a hold on them—a man may not spend five years in a dungeon because of a dashing mad act of bravery without acquiring a halo which adheres afterward; it was fairly certain that a military company, originating with the Chevalier Beaupré, would succeed. And it succeeded. Three days later it was started with the cor-

dial sanction of the fathers and the enthusiasm of the sons. François was, of course, the moving spirit and the responsible head, and François was hard at work calling back the old lore of his school-days at Saint-Cyr and reading books on tactics and all military subjects.

"Henry," said Colonel Hampton one morning after breakfast at Roanoke House, "I want to speak to you a moment in my study."

Harry went calmly into the dim, pleasant, old room, with its paneled walls and portraits set into the paneling; he had no fear of what his uncle might say, for he was not merely the young nephew and ward living in his uncle's house—he was the owner of most of the acres which made the plantation a great one. Colonel Hampton considered that in his treatment of Harry, and Harry knew it well enough. Moreover, it was an unspoken secret that Harry or Lucy had the right of strength over weakness in dealing with the head of the house. Obstinacy combined sometimes with weakness, it is true, but yet the two youngsters understood clearly that the colonel was the head only by a graceful fiction. So young Henry Hampton felt no alarm at the quality of his uncle's tone. The colonel sat down in the biggest chair, a chair throne-like in its

dignity; he faced the lad and pulled importantly at the end of his mustache.

"This troop of cavalry is about organized?" he demanded.

"Well, that's rather a big name for it, Uncle Henry, but it is going like a streak," answered Henry, junior. "We meet again to-day, and to-morrow I think we shall begin business."

"I approve of it," Colonel Hampton stated.

Harry bowed his head gravely. The colonel went on.

"It is a well-bred and appropriate method of amusement. A gentleman should know something of military affairs. But—ah—the ranking and—ah—arrangements? Such—details are not unlikely, with gentlemen of the first families, as you all are—except one—to crystallize into a—later importance. The man who has been the leader of this company of very young men will not unlikely be the man thought of as a leader in—ah—affairs of greater moment to come. May I inquire who is the captain?"

Henry Hampton looked troubled, impatient.

"Why, nobody yet, Uncle Henry. We have not got to that. But, of course, the Chevalier—"

Colonel Hampton interrupted him. "Exactly.

I thought so. That is what I wish to avoid. The Chevalier must not be the captain."

The boy caught up the words hotly. "Uncle Henry, he has done it all. We all want him."

"Exactly. But you must not have him. I am surprised at you, Henry! Do you remember that this man is peasant-born? Do you want to be led into battle by a person whose rank is not above that of our own servants?"

"Led into battle!" Young Henry laughed shortly. "Led into a corn field is more like it." And then his glance fired. "Moreover, Uncle Henry, if there were battle in the case, we should all count ourselves lucky to be led by—a hero."

"A hero!" Colonel Hampton sniffed. "A mere French peasant, by his own account. Of course, I have—received him, because of your infatuation for him. And—the young man has qualities. He has been a success socially, I will not deny. I am quite surprised by his success. But when it comes to putting him into a position above men of birth, my blood revolts. I request you, Henry, to use your influence against this. I can not endure to have him give you commands. You should be the captain, because your social position has made the enterprise possible. But, yet, if—your misfortune—if some

other seems more fit—" A painful color darkened the boy's face and his brows gathered. The colonel went on. "I should make no objection to that. But"—again he pulled at the corners of his mustache with solemnity—"I must request you to use your influence absolutely to prevent this parvenu from being placed over you."

Harry Hampton put his hand on the table beside him and lifting himself with that aid stood before his uncle, leaning a little on the table as his lame foot made it necessary, but yet a figure full of decision and dignity.

"And I must refuse absolutely, Uncle Henry, to do anything of the kind. I am not in question. As you say, I have—a misfortune. I shall use what influence I have to see that the Chevalier Beaupré is made captain of the company he has organized and is to educate. That is fitting. I am proud to call him my friend, and I am glad that I am large-minded enough to realize that as large a mind as his is not to be measured by petty standards. If he is a prince or if he is a peasant is quite immaterial, because he is first a very great thing—himself." He turned from the astonished colonel, and with his halting step was gone.

Shortly the young master's horse was ordered and

he had left word with Ebenezer, the butler, as he went out, that he would not be home till bedtime, and was off toward Carnifax.

"François," he began, finding his friend busy over his papers in that same library, at that same carved mahogany desk, where to-day lie the packages of old letters—"François, I want to speak to you—about something—before our meeting."

"What then? The boy is out of breath. You have been running Black Hawk again, my Henry—that horse will complain of you soon, the strong beast. What is it you are in such a hurry to say that one must race across country so of a good hour of the morning?"

But Henry was too intent to talk nothings. "It is important," he said briefly. "We must have a captain for the company at once, and it must be you."

"Sabre de bois!" smiled François radiantly. "The good idea! I can not imagine a fellow more beautiful to be a captain than I. Can you?"

But Henry was altogether serious-minded. "You will consent then?" he threw at him. "I did not think of it till this morning, but I see it should be done at once. We will all want you, of course, and want nobody else."

Now Henry Hampton, not having thought of the

question till this morning, had no right to make this statement in a full round voice of certainty. Yet he knew every man in the company, and he felt in himself the force to answer for them. He answered for them without a hesitation. And with that François' laughing face grew grave. He pushed the letters from him and got up and came across to the boy and bent and put his arm around his shoulder as he sat still and stiff. These French ways of his friend pleased Harry immensely, but they also petrified him with embarrassment. François was not in the least embarrassed. He patted the broad young shoulder affectionately.

"My good Henry," he said gently. "What a loyal heart—and what a reckless one! How then can you answer for all these messieurs?"

Harry flung up his head and began. "They will —if they do not I shall make them"—but François stopped the bold words.

"No," he said quietly—yet with a tone of finality which the other recognized. "That will not be necessary. And the messieurs are my good friends; they will treat me with honor; they will be better to me than I deserve. I know that well." There were so few people in the world who did not, to François, seem his good friends. "But, my Henry,

I will not be the captain. I have thought of that, if you have not. Look here."

He swung to the desk and slipped out a drawer, and had a long folded paper in his hands. He flapped it open before Harry's eyes. It was a formal notice to Mr. Henry Hampton, junior, that the Jefferson Troop of Virginia had elected him as its captain.

Harry flushed violently and his mouth quivered with pleasure, with nervousness, with unhappiness. The other watched him eagerly. All this affair of the troop he had done to give pleasure to Harry Hampton, his friend. It was the only way in which the lame boy could be on equal terms with the other boys, and François had determined from the first that every joy which could be gleaned out of it he should have. To be the captain ought to be a joy.

"I!" Harry cried and then was silent—and then spoke sorrowfully. "But—it can not be!"

"Can not be?" demanded François. "Why not?"

There was a moment's silence and with a painful effort the words came. "My—misfortune. I am lame."

And François cried out, "Henry—all that is nonsense! What of it? It is a thing you do as well as the best—riding. Who has such a seat, such

hands as you? Why not then, I demand?" And went on. "It is settled. I have talked to them all —see the signatures. You are the captain, my Henry—and I am your right hand and your left hand—yes and your feet, too, whenever you need me."

"But," said Harry, dazed, "it is really your place; don't you want to be captain?" he shot at the other boyishly.

And with that François' arm was about his shoulder again as the two stood together, and François was laughing. "But yes," he said. "I should like it. That is a secret." His face was brilliant with laughter. "You only may know, my Henry, that I am vain—ah, very vain," he repeated sadly. "Never tell it. I love titles and honors and importance. I like to be called Chevalier—though indeed that is my right," he added with a quick touch of dignity. "And I should like very much to be captain of this company of fine young men, the flowers —does one say?—of the South. But it is not best." He held up his forefinger and looked enormously worldly-wise. "No. You would not mind; the young messieurs would not mind, perhaps—but the fathers—ah, the fathers!" He threw back his head and gazed at the ceiling with eyes of horror. Then

with a start and a hand flung out, "And the mothers! *Mon Dieu!* But the mothers, Henry! They would make—what you call it—a hell of a time, is it not?"

Harry roared with joy at the terrified whisper. "But I have neither father nor mother," he suggested.

"Ah, Henry," argued François with deep satisfaction in his tone, "that makes you so suitable."

"Suitable?" inquired Henry.

"But yes, my friend. It kills jealousy. All is grist, one says, that comes at your mill. All is fathers, all is mothers to the poor orphan—and besides that, there is Monsieur the Colonel. One sees that the uncle of the captain will be contented. And whom should I wish to content but my first host, my first benefactor in this land? I believe, indeed, he would be displeased if I should take the place. I believe he is not satisfied of my birth."

And beneath the nonsense of François, Henry could but acknowledge the clear-sighted logic. So it happened that Henry Hampton became captain of the Jefferson Troop, to the entire satisfaction of all concerned.

Yet Colonel Hampton, who had the unconquerable clinging of a weak character to post-mortems,

could not resist harking back to the possibility which had offended him. He did not like to cross swords again with Harry on the subject, having found that young person's blade heavy; so he went to his daughter. That tiny executive person with a basket of big keys, which, to a southern housekeeper, is more than a badge, came out on the shady gallery where the colonel sat in immaculate linen, for the day was like August, and sipped a mint-julep made of the tender leaves of a second growth of the mint bed, made of sugar ground with mint, of ice powdered fine in a napkin, of Bourbon whisky poured in to the top of all. The frost on the silver cup stood like a snow-drift; the fresh mint spears lifted in stiff ranks above; it was a beautiful julep; one would have thought the colonel could not be querulous with such a bouquet in his hand. But the colonel was allowing himself to be irritated.

"Young Allen Fitzhugh has just been here," he began, and his daughter knew from the tone that something was wrong.

"Yes. I saw him. He and Harry have ridden to Carnifax."

"Those lads talk great nonsense," growled the colonel.

"Yes," Lucy agreed. "I like to hear them."

"I don't." With that the colonel brought his fist down on his chair arm, and joggled the beautiful julep and spilled some of it on his white linen trousers. Lucy laughed. The colonel's temper was not improved.

"Pernicious nonsense they talk. About this absurd young Chevalier, as they call him—though where he got his title I can not guess."

"What about the Chevalier?" Lucy's blue eyes were serious.

"Oh, about his virtues and his charms," the colonel grumbled vaguely. "And about his undoubted right to have been captain of the troop, and his fine spirit in refusing. A pest! As if he dared accept! As if we Virginians would see a common peasant set over our children."

There was a complete silence on the broad shady gallery for a moment. The breeze rustled in the live-oak trees and went on beyond as if light-footed ladies in silk petticoats had slipped past. Out at the cabins one heard two negro women singing in rich voices:

"Nellie was a lady—
Last night she died."

The women sang far away. Bees hummed in the garden. The colonel sipped at his mint-julep.

Then Lucy's soft falling voice spoke very clearly. "I think the boys are right, father. I agree with them that the Chevalier showed a fine spirit."

The colonel turned angrily. "You don't understand what you are talking about," he shot at her peevishly. "I am astonished at you, Lucy! You —a lady—a Hampton, to encourage this man of low birth who has worked his way into our society!"

But Lucy answered him quite easily, quite firmly. "You know you don't believe that, father. You know he has not 'worked his way' among us, but that everybody has been delighted to welcome him in. Why, you like him, father—you are as friendly to him as any one when he comes here."

The colonel looked worried. "Oh—friendly—of course. In my own house. And besides, society has accepted him; he is a manner of celebrity; I do not wish to be thought bearish. But it is a dangerous precedent. I do not like it. The next thing the fellow might wish to marry one of our southern ladies!"

Once again one heard the bees hum, and the colored women singing, and the breeze in the trees, and then Lucy's low decided voice spoke clearly. "I think it would be a very fortunate woman whom the Chevalier might wish to marry," she said.

CHAPTER XXVII

HERO WORSHIP

IT had come about that Lucy Hampton was a scholar of François. The colonel, lamenting on a day that there were no capable teachers of French in the neighborhood, that Lucy's schoolgirl command of the language was fast disappearing, and an accomplishment so vital to a lady was likely soon to be lost—this saga of regret being sung by the colonel at the dinner-table, François had offered to teach mademoiselle his mother tongue. And the colonel had accepted the offer.

"If you are not too busy, Chevalier. And I suppose your—ah—accent—is entirely good? One can not be too careful, you know. At least we shall not quarrel about the terms, for whatever money you think right to ask I shall be ready to pay," and the colonel felt himself a man of the world and extremely generous.

"Father!" Lucy cried quickly.

François' eyes were on his plate but they swept

up with their wide brown gaze full on the colonel's face. "I am not too busy, Monsieur the Colonel. As for my accent—I am a peasant, as Monsieur knows, but yet I am instructed. I was for years at Saint-Cyr, the great military school of France. I believe my accent is right. As for money"—a quick motion, all French, spoke a whole sentence. "If Monsieur insists on that—that must finish it. To me it would be impossible to take money for the pleasure of teaching mademoiselle." He flashed at Lucy a smile all gentleness, and Lucy's eyes, waiting for that smile, met his shyly.

The colonel blustered a bit, but the lessons were arranged as François wished, and twice a week throughout the winter he rode over from Carnifax to give them. And little by little he came to know the small mistress of the manor as few had known her. People thought Lucy Hampton too serious and staid for a young girl; no one realized that, her mother being dead and her father such as he was, the clear-headed little person had begun at ten or twelve years old to know that she must make her own decisions, and many of her father's also. At fourteen she had taken the keys and the responsibility of the house, and now, at sixteen, she was in reality the head of the whole great plantation. The

colonel, who would have been most indignant to be told so, leaned on her in every detail, and it was she who planned and decided and often executed the government of the little kingdom.

Those who think of southern ladies of the old régime as idle do not understand what their life was. The position of mayor of a city would approach idleness as nearly. It was for the woman at the head of such a place to guide the household work of a great number of servants; to train new servants as they were added to the corps; to manage the commissariat for all this army; to see that the fruits of one season were cooked and made into the sweets and pickles and drinks of another; to look after the clothing of hundreds of negroes on the plantation, cutting and arranging with her own hands. Beyond this, to the mind of a conscientious southern woman, such as was young Lucy Hampton, the souls of her slaves were her charge as well as their bodies. As she stood slim and fair and young, in the great, shadowy, sunshot hall of Roanoke House, and read and explained the Bible or led the singing, while all the earnest, reverent, black faces turned to her trustingly, it was a great power to be given into such hands, and she felt it so. In addition to all this a lady of Virginia must

entertain and go into society and be a *grande dame* as well as, if it so happened, a devoted wife and mother.

All this, except the last, lay on the slender shoulders of Lucy Hampton, and besides all this she had begun in very childhood to hold up the hands and do the thinking of an incompetent father. It was not wonderful that she was graver and slower to frolic than other girls of sixteen. Her conscientious young brain was full of care, and light-heartedness of youth had never had a chance to grow in that crowded place. Her cousin had come to live with them only the year before, when his mother had died, his father being dead long ago; and Lucy knew quite well that her father had planned that the two should marry and unite the broad acres of the Hamptons.

But the young longing for romance which was in her in spite of the choking sober business of her life, rebelled at this. She would not give herself as well as all her thought and effort for Roanoke. She wanted to love somebody, and be loved for herself as other girls were; she would not marry Harry because he and her father considered it a good arrangement. So strongly had this determination seized her that, looking entirely down that way of

thought, she failed to see that Harry might not be classed with the colonel in his view of the plan. She failed to see that if she had not been heiress to Roanoke House, or to anything at all, Harry Hampton would still have been in love with his cousin Lucy. For Harry saw how the young life had been pressed into a service too hard for it almost from babyhood; Harry saw how unselfish she was and trustworthy; how broad-minded and warm-hearted; how she would like to be care free and irresponsible like other girls of her age, only that the colonel and the estate were always there, always demanding her time and her attention. He could do little to help her as yet, but he longed to lift the weight and carry it with her, not away from her, for the fairy of a person was not the sort to lean on others or to be happy without her share of the burden. Yet, Harry thought, "If I might only help her, and make it all a delight instead of a labor!"

But Lucy, going about her busy days, never guessed this. She thought of Harry as the boy whom she had grown up with, to be cared for tenderly always because of his misfortune, to be helped and planned for and loved indeed, because he was lame and her cousin, and because he was a dear boy and her best friend. But as the hero of her own romance

to come, she refused to think of him at all. More firmly she refused such an idea, of course, because her father had hinted that it would complete both Harry's and his happiness. She had laughed at Harry openly about the scheme more than once, and he had flushed and kept silent and Lucy had thought:

"Poor old honest Harry! He has been browbeaten by my father, but he will not lie to me, the good lad."

François, with quick insight, saw as much as this, and was anxious for the boy who had been his warm and steady friend. What he did not see was that Lucy was fitting his own personality into that empty notch of her imagination where an altar stood and a candle burned, ready for the image that was to come above them. That never entered his mind, for in his mind Alixe was the only woman living to be considered in such a relation. And, in spite of the seigneur, in spite of Pietro, in spite of his wholehearted giving up of her, there was a happy obstinate corner in the depths of his soul which yet whispered against all reason that it might be that Alixe loved him, that it might be, for unheard-of things happened every day, it might be yet that—with all honor, with all happiness to those others

whom he loved—he might some day be free to love her. He knew it to be impossible, yet ever in his being, like a stream singing underground in a forest, the unphrased thought lived always. So that as he grew to care for and understand Lucy Hampton more and more, no faintest dream of caring for her as he did for Alixe came ever into his mind.

The situation, given this most winning and lovable young man, filled with warm gratitude and admiration, given two opportunities a week all winter for unconscious molding of the plastic material of little Lucy's affections—given these things, the situation for Lucy was unsafe.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A LESSON IN FRENCH

ON an evening when winter was wearing away to cold spring, François waited in the dining-room of Roanoke House for his scholar. It was very still in the large house. The sharp wind of a March in Virginia whistled through the bare branches of trees in the park outside. Inside, the crackling of a fire of piled hickory logs tempered with its careless naturalness the formality of the fine old room. The room had a sweet and stately beauty, a graceful stiffness like the manners of the women who first lived in it, a hundred years before. The carved white woodwork over the doors was yellowed to ivory; the mantelpiece, brought from France in 1732, framed in its fluted pillars, its garlands and chiseled nymphs and shepherds, as if under protest, the rollicking orange of the fire. Over a mahogany sofa, covered with slippery horsehair, hung a portrait of the first lady of the manor, and François, sitting soldierly erect in a straight chair,

smiled as his gaze fell on it—it was so like yet so unlike a face which he knew. There was the delicate oval chin and straight nose, and fair loose hair. But the portrait was staid and serious, while Lucy's face, as this man had seen it, had kindly eyes and a mouth smiling always. He shook his head in gentle amusement at the grave dignity of the picture.

"But no, Madame—you are not so charming as your granddaughter," he said, addressing it aloud.

And then he stepped across the room to the fire, and held his hands to it and stared into it. The clock ticked firmly, the logs fell apart with soft sliding sounds, and he stared down at them—his thoughts far away—a look came into his eyes as if they concentrated on something beyond the range of sight, the characteristic look of François, the old look of a dreamer, of a seer of visions.

Then Lucy stood in the doorway, gentle, charming from the slippered feet, laced over the instep, to the shadowy locks of light hair on her forehead.

"Good evening, Monsieur. I am sorry I kept you waiting. Hannibal hurt his foot and I must find plaster and bandage for him. But you will have enough of my talking even now. Father says I talk a great deal. Do I, Monsieur?"

François stood regarding her, with frank admira-

tion in every muscle of his face. He smiled, the same gentle amused smile with which he had addressed the portrait. "You never talk too much for me, Mademoiselle. It is a pleasure to me always to hear your voice," he answered in the deep tone of a Frenchman, the tone that has ever a half note of tragedy, as of some race-memory which centuries do not wipe out. "Only," he went on speaking in French, "one must not talk English. That is breaking the law, you remember, Mademoiselle."

She answered very prettily in his own tongue, in words that halted a little. "Very well, Monsieur. I will do my best." He still gazed at her smiling, without speaking. One could understand that, to a girl of more self-contained people, this open homage of manner, this affectionate gentleness, might seem to mean more than a brotherly loyalty. The girl's pulse was beating fast as she made an effort for conversation. "What were you thinking of as you looked at the fire when I came in, Monsieur? It had an air of being something pleasant. Did I not say all that beautifully?" she finished in English.

He corrected a lame verb with serious accuracy and she repeated the word, and laughed happily.

"But you haven't said yet what you were thinking about."

The large brown eyes turned on hers. "It was of my old home in France, Mademoiselle, when I was very little," he said simply. "A large fire of logs makes me think of that."

"Tell me about it," she begged with quick interest. "Will you? Was there always a fire at your house?"

"But no, Mademoiselle—not, of course, in the summer. It was of the winter time I thought, when the neighbors came, in the evening, and we sat about the hearth, sometimes twenty people, each at his different duty, and my brothers and sisters were there, and the dear *grand-mère* was there and—" he stopped. "Does Mademoiselle really wish to hear how it was in that old farm-house of ours, in the shadow of the Jura Mountains?"

"Indeed, Mademoiselle wishes it," she assured him. "It will be a trip to Europe. I am sure I shall speak better French for going to France for ten minutes, and being among the French people, your friends. Wait now, till I am comfortable." She turned a deep chair so that it faced him, and dropped into it. "Put a footstool for me," she ordered, as southern women order the men they care for—and the men they do not. And she settled back with her little feet on it and smiled at him. For

a moment the man's brilliant gaze rested on her and the girl saw it, and thrilled to it. "Now, Monsieur, *racontez-moi une histoire,*" she spoke softly.

François Beaupré's look turned from her to the fire, and the air of gazing at something far away came again. "It is a picture I see as I think of that time of my childhood," he began, as if speaking to himself. "A picture many times painted in home-like colors on my brain. Many a night in the winter I have sat, a little boy, by the side of my grand-mother, at that great hearth, and have looked and have seen all the faces, have heard all the voices and the fire crackling, and the spinning-wheel whirring, even as I see them and hear them to-night. I was always close by the *grand-mère,* for I was the dearest of the children to her. Sometimes long after my bedtime I sat there, but very quietly, for fear that my mother might remember and send me to bed; yet she liked to please the *grand-mère,* so I stayed often longer than the others. It was a great room, and across one corner was the hearth which was raised like a throne, Mademoiselle, from the floor, twelve feet wide. One burned logs six feet long within it, and from up the chimney swung the *crémaillere*— the chains from which were hung the kettles. It was the house of a peasant, Mademoiselle knows, yet

it was the best house in the village. Often, of a November night, the neighbors would come in, perhaps a dozen, perhaps more, and the young men had their work—they arranged the flax for spinning, it might be,—and the young girls prepared apples to dry, and the mothers' knitting needles flashed back and forth on the stockings for our winter wear, and the *grand-mère* would be spinning linen threads for our clothing—whirr, whirr—I can hear the low sound of her wheel. And always I, François, would be on the stool at her side, watching and listening. For my father was a great raconteur, and he told stories of the war and of the legends of that country. It was an ancient country you must know, Mademoiselle, and the name of our village itself was from the Romans. Vicques was the name, and that as you know, Mademoiselle, comes from the Latin word *vicus,* a village. So that there were old castles in ruin in those parts and tales of buried treasure, and ghosts in armor guarding it, and great dogs that breathed flame, and other things pleasantly horrible to the ear of a little boy. On the cold nights, as the fire roared up the chimney and the grandmother's wheel whirred softly, my father and the other men told these tales, and I listened, quiet as a mouse in my corner, and from time to time I saw a young

man lean over and whisper in the ear of one of the young girls, and I wondered why her face became red as the firelight.

"And from time to time one of the men, as he talked, rose up and strode across the room to the great oak table where lay always on a wooden plate a long loaf of black bread, with a knife, and always a glass and a bottle of *eau-de-vie*—brandy. And I remember how manly it looked to me, watching, when I saw him take the loaf under his arm and hold it, and slice off boldly a great piece of the fresh rye bread, and pour out a glass of brandy and toss it off as he ate the bread. The stories seemed to grow better after the teller had done that.

"And always I waited, even through the tale of the ghost and the fire-breathing hound, till the talk should swing round, as it did ever toward the end, to the stories of Napoleon that were fresh in men's minds in those days. It was as if I sat on needles before my bedtime came, yet I did not dare to be restless and move about for fear that my mother might send me suddenly to bed. But I always gave a sigh of content and always the *grand-mère* patted my head softly to hear it, when my father cleared his throat and began—

" 'There is a small thing that happened when the

Emperor was marching'—and then he was launched on his tale."

A great hickory log fell, rolled out toward the hearth. The carved nymphs and shepherds seemed to frown in disapproval at this irregularity, and the girl in the deep chair smiled, but the man sprang up and put the log back in place with quick efficiency. He stood silent by the tall mantelpiece, deep yet in his reverie, as the flames caught the wood again and sparkled and sputtered.

"Did any of them ever see Napoleon—those men who talked about him?" the girl asked.

The Frenchman turned a queer look on her, and did not answer.

"Did any of your family ever see him, Monsieur?" she asked again.

The alert figure stepped backward, sat down again on the gilded chair and leaned forward considerингly. François nodded as if to the fire. "But yes, Mademoiselle," he said, in a whisper.

"Oh, tell me!" the girl cried, all interest. "Who was it? How was it? It couldn't be"—she hesitated—"yourself! If you, whom I know so well, should have seen the Emperor!" She caught a deep breath of excitement. This was another Lucy Hampton from the serious young mistress of Roan-

oke House whom the country people knew. "Quickly, Monsieur, tell me if it was yourself!"

François turned his eyes on her. "Yes, Mademoiselle," he answered.

A log slipped and slid and the sparks caught a new surface and flew aloft in a crackling uproar; the elfish light showered brilliancy on the girl's fair hair as she bent forward with her white teeth gleaming, her blue eyes shining, stirred with the dramatic air of the Frenchman. With a catch of her breath—

"You have seen Napoleon!" she said, and then, impetuously, "Tell me about it!" But, though he smiled at her with that affectionate amusement which she seemed, of all sentiments, oftenest to inspire in him, he did not answer.

"Monsieur! you will not refuse to tell me when I want to know so much!" she pleaded, and went on. "How old were you? Did he speak to you? What did he say to you?"

And the Frenchman laughed as if at a dear child who was absurd. "Mademoiselle asks many questions—which shall I answer?" he demanded, and the tone to her ear was the tone of love, and she trembled to hear it.

"Answer"—she began, and stammered and flushed, and stopped.

François went on, little thinking what damage he was doing with that unconscious charm of voice and look.

"It is as Mademoiselle wishes, most certainly. I will even answer Mademoiselle's two questions at once to please her. It was when I was not quite three years old, Mademoiselle, at home in the farm-house in the valley of the Jura."

"And he spoke to you, to your own self? Are you sure?"

"But yes, he spoke to me, Mademoiselle."

"What did he say?" The smile on François' face went out and into its place swept an intensity of feeling; he answered solemnly: "There were but few words, Mademoiselle, but they have been much to my life. They shall lead my life, if God pleases, those words shall lead it to the fate which they foretold."

"What were the words?" whispered the girl, impressed with awe.

François suddenly stood erect and stretched out his arm as if to hold a sword. "'Rise Chevalier François Beaupré, one day a Marshal of France under another Napoleon,'" he repeated dramatically. "Those were the words the Emperor said."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE STORY AGAIN

THE girl, her face lifted to him, looked bewildered. "I don't understand."

The visionary eyes stared at her uncertainly. "I have never told this thing," he said in a low tone.

"Ah—but it's only me," begged the girl.

"Only you, Mademoiselle!" His voice went on as if reflecting aloud. "It is the guiding star of my life—that story; yet I may tell it"—he paused—"to 'only you'."

Again the girl quivered, feeling the intensity, mistaking its meaning. "I should be glad if you would tell it," she spoke almost in a whisper, but François, floating backward on a strong tide to those old beloved days, did not notice.

In his mind was the memory of the great entry of the farm-house, and the children crowding about the grandmother, and the gentle old voice, now gone into silence, which had told the tale. The sunshine lay in patches on the floor, the breeze tossed the red

and yellow tulips in the garden, and through the open door he saw his mother move about the kitchen getting dinner ready before the father should come in from the fields. All the early life, long dissolved in the past, materialized before him, and his heart ached with a longing to speak of them, to relieve thus the pressure of the crowding thoughts of home.

"It may seem a simple affair to you, Mademoiselle —I can not tell that. It has affected my life. The way of it was this: Napoleon marched to Germany in the year 1813, and passed with his staff through our village. The house of my father was the largest in the village, and it was chosen to be, for an hour, the Emperor's headquarters, and the Emperor held a council of war, he and his generals, there. I, a child of three, was sleeping in a room which opened from the great room, and I wakened with the sound of voices, and ran in, unnoticed, for they were all bent over the table, looking at the maps and lists of the mayor—and I pulled at the sword of Marshal Ney. And the marshal, turning quickly, knocked me over. I cried out, and my grandmother ran to me, and I have often heard her tell how she peeped from the door under the shoulder of the big sentry who would not let her pass, and how she saw a young general pick me up and set me on my feet,

and how all the great officers laughed when he said that the sword was in contest between Marshal Ney and me. And how, then, the young general suggested that, to settle the point amicably, the marshal should draw his sword, and give me the accolade—the blow of knighting. And so, Mademoiselle, to shorten the tale, it was not the marshal, but the Emperor himself who chose to do it. He made me kneel before him, I—a baby—and he struck my shoulder the blow of the accolade, and said the words which I have told you."

François sprang to his feet and stood as he repeated once more the Emperor's words. His voice shook.

"'Rise Chevalier François Beaupré, one day a Marshal of France under another Bonaparte,'" he cried, thrilled through with the words which he repeated.

The girl leaning forward, watched him; with a gasp she spoke. "Then—that is why you are really Chevalier Beaupré? Did the Emperor have the right to—to knight you?"

"But yes, Mademoiselle," François answered with decision. "I have studied the question, and I believe that the accolade—the knighting—was always a right of the monarchs of France, disused,

perhaps at times, but yet held in abeyance, a right. My family did not agree with me. My father, who was very practical, thought that it was a mere joke of the Emperor's—or if not a joke, then a caprice which carried no weight. But the seigneur—the General Gourgaud, who was one of Napoleon's officers, and others, Mademoiselle, believe as I do. And to my mind it is impossible that the Emperor's word should carry no weight. There has never lived on earth a man of so enormous a force, and even the smallest acts of his were history. If the Emperor ordained, then, that a little child of the people, a peasant, should be a noble—why, it was well within his power—it was done. And I am that child."

The glance of his brilliant eyes met hers with a frank calmness which showed that he claimed nothing which he did not feel; that this haphazard nobility had lived in his soul and grown with his growth, and come to be part of him. With a gentle humility, very winning as it sprang from his gentle pride, he went on.

"I know, Mademoiselle, that I am a peasant and that I must be content with a small place in life at the present. I know this. And even that position which I have is more than my brothers. For you

must know, Mademoiselle, that the others grew up to be farmers or tradesmen." He hesitated, and then in a few words told her of General Gourgaud, the seigneur of Vicques, and how he had given the peasant boy all the opportunities which his own son could have had. And as he talked he remembered how, after his father's ruin, he had stood inside the bare, little, new cottage and watched through the window his mother standing at the gate and talking to the seigneur, who held Lisette's bridle. It seemed to him he could see the dark braided hair of La Claire, coiled around her head, and the deep point of her white neck-handkerchief, as she stood with her back to him, and the big bow of the apron tied about her waist. The picture came vividly. And it opened his heart so that he talked on, and told this stranger in a strange land many things that had lain close and silent in his heart. He told her about the general's gruffness, which could not hide his goodness; and how he had come to be the child of the castle as well as of the cottage; something of Pietro also he told her; but he did not mention Alixe.

"You spoke of three children, Monsieur; who was the third?" asked Lucy.

François went on as if he had not heard the question. "It was a happy life, Mademoiselle," he said.

"And it has been so ever since—even, for the most part, in prison. I have wondered at times if the world is all filled with such kind people as I have met, or if it is just my good luck."

Lucy Hampton had been reading aloud to her sick black mammy that day, and some of the words of the book she had read came to her, and seemed to fit. "The kingdom of God is within you," she quoted softly, to François. Then she considered a moment.

"Monsieur, would it be impertinent for me to ask you a question—a personal question?"

"I think not, Mademoiselle," he smiled at her.

She went on, hesitating a little. "Father was talking of how Prince Louis Bonaparte served, a few years ago, with the Italian revolutionists. I wondered if—if by chance you had fought under him."

He shook his head. "I had not that happiness, Mademoiselle."

"The heir of the Bonapartes now is that Prince Louis Napoleon, is it not?" she questioned.

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"And he made an attempt on the city of Strasburg, a few months ago, and was tried for it—and all that—father talked about it so much I could not

help knowing a little about it, but I don't remember distinctly."

"But certainly, Mademoiselle. It was the Prince."

"Then, haven't they just done something to him? Isn't there something people are interested in just now about that Prince Louis?"

The grave bright smile flashed out at her. "In truth, Mademoiselle, there is. The Prince was shipped by his jailers on the frigate *Andromède* more than four months ago, for what port is unknown. One has not heard of him lately, and there are fears that he may have suffered shipwreck. But I do not fear. It is the hope of France, it is France's destiny which the *Andromède* carries. It will carry that great cargo safely. The young Prince will yet come to his own, and I—and perhaps you, Mademoiselle—who knows?—will cry for him *'Vive l'Empereur!'*"

The tone full of feeling thrilled through the girl. She flushed and stammered as she went on, but François, carried away by his enthusiasm, did not think of it. "If you will let me ask you just one question more, Monsieur, I will promise not to ask any after."

The flicker of amusement lighted his face. "Ask me a thousand, Mademoiselle."

"No, only one. Did that seigneur—that General Gourgaud—did he have any—any daughter?"

The Frenchman rose in a businesslike way, the way of a teacher of language at the end of a lesson.

"One," he answered briefly in a matter-of-fact tone. And then, "Mademoiselle has talked enchantingly well this evening, but I have perhaps talked too much. I may have tired Mademoiselle. I have the honor to wish you a good evening."

His heels together, he stood in the doorway and made his bow. *"Au plaisir de vous revoir,"* he said, and was gone.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PRINCE COMES

THE glittering morning sunlight of late March flooded the eastern dining-room of Roanoke House. As the bare branches of the trees outside moved up and down in the biting breeze, the shadows danced on brown blackness of wainscoted walls, and against that deep background Lucy Hampton's gold head shone as Madonna heads shine from dim canvasses. A fire blazed on the hearth; hot dishes steamed on the table; the girl's face, the crackling fire, the polished silver reflected from polished mahogany; the soft shod, solicitous service of a white-aproned negro; all this made the room fragrant with homeliness in spite of the fact that one could see one's breath in the air. But they were used to it—the hardy Virginians of those days of open fires and no furnaces, of many luxuries and few comforts, and in happy ignorance of world progress, they suffered cheerfully and were strong.

Colonel Henry Hampton faced a portrait of the

first Henry Hampton of Roanoke, stately with brass buttons and silver lace, set in the panels seventy-five years before. Lucy had concluded her broiled chicken and bacon and hot bread, and now as he, late for breakfast always, followed in her wake, he read the *Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald* with which a colored boy had that morning ridden out from Norfolk, eight miles away. It was before the time of daily papers, except in a large city or two, and this of once a week was an event; a boy was sent into Norfolk the day before its publication that the colonel might have it at the earliest moment.

The colonel's heavy-dragoon type of face was handsome and weak; a bushy mustache jutted from beneath his fine nose, as if in an effort to make it soldierly and masculine. The features were modeled on the big-boned, lean features of men who had done things; only the spirit was left out. It was as if a man who inherited his ancestor's massive silver platters had no meat to put on them. His uncertain eyes, under their splendid brows, wandered from column to column of the little sheet, leaving this and that article unfinished, and as he read he reported bits of news to his daughter.

"How would you like to see a live prince, Lucy?" he inquired. "The *Herald* states that we have one

with us, not ten miles from Roanoke. Prince Louis Napoleon was landed from the *Andromède,* in Norfolk, only yesterday. Poor young man," he went on condescendingly, "he has no money, I understand, and here he is stranded in a strange country with his fortune to make, and no assets but a title. It's little that will help him in the states!"

Colonel Hampton glanced over to see if she were listening to his words of wisdom; he liked an attentive audience. He was enchanted with her expression. She had dropped knife and fork and, with her blue eyes stretched wide, her white teeth shining, was drinking in his sentences.

"Father! Is Prince Louis in Norfolk? How can it be? Monsieur Beaupré was talking to me about him last night, and he did not dream of his coming here. Surely he would have known if the Prince were expected."

Colonel Hampton smiled sarcastically. "You will find that your father occasionally knows more than even Monsieur Beaupré, and even on French questions, I may add," he announced, from a mountain height. "But in one point you are right, my dear. The Prince was not expected by any one, not even by the great Chevalier Beaupré. He was exiled from France, as you may or may not know, some

four and a half months ago, on account of his attempt on Strasburg, and was sent out on the *Andromède,* with sealed orders. No one knew his destination until he landed, on the twenty-eighth, in Norfolk. There"—the colonel got up and walked to the fireplace and stood with his back to the blaze, and his legs far apart, masterfully. "There, my dear. I have given you a dose of history for a female mind. How are you going to amuse your little self today?"

The female mind paid no attention to the digression. Lucy had long ago, finally if unconsciously, put her father's personality into its right place.

"Father, is the Prince really poor and alone in this country?"

"Poor—yes, I fancy—I am quite certain, in fact. Alone—that depends. The authorities of Norfolk received him with some distinction, the *Herald* states, but he is putting up at the inn—one would conclude that he was not an invited guest at many of our great houses."

Lucy flew like a bird across to the fireplace. Her hands went up to either side of the colonel's face. "Father, quick! Have Thunder saddled, and ride in—quick, father—and bring the Prince out here to stay with us. Give the order to Sambo, or I shall"

Colonel Hampton's eyes widened with surprise. "Why, but Lucy," he stammered. "Why—but why should I? What claim have we—"

"Oh, nonsense," and Lucy shook her head impatiently. "Who has more claim? Aren't we Virginians of the James River princes in our own country, too? Hasn't our family reigned in Roanoke longer than ever his reigned in Europe? Haven't we enough house-room and servants to make him as comfortable as in a palace? But that isn't the most important. It is a shame to us all, father, that no one has invited him before, that a strange gentleman of high station should have to lodge at an inn. Why hasn't Cousin George Harrison asked him to Brandon? And the Carters at Shirley, and the people at Berkeley—what do they mean by not asking him? But we won't let Virginian hospitality be stained. We will ask him. You will ride to Norfolk at once, will you not, father dear?"

The touch on his cheek was pleasant to the vain and affectionate man, but the spirit of the girl's speech, the suggestion of the courtesy due from him as a reigning prince, to this other Prince forlorn and exiled, this was pleasanter. He pursed his lips and smiled down.

"Out of the mouth of babes," he remarked, and

drew his brows together as if under stress of large machinery behind them. "My little girl, you have rather a sensible idea. I had overlooked before that"—he cleared his throat and black Aaron standing tray in hand across the room, jumped and rolled his eyes—"that," he continued, "a man of my importance has duties of hospitality, even to a foreigner who comes without introduction into the country."

"Introduction—bother!" remarked the daughter. "The idea of a nephew of the Emperor of France needing"—she stopped. This was the wrong line of argument. "I think he will be delighted to come to Roanoke House," she went on. "It is so beautiful even in winter," and she looked proudly about the fine room, and the portraits on its walls looked back at her proudly too.

"Many distinguished guests have been delighted to visit Roanoke," Colonel Hampton answered stiffly. "The bankrupt sprig of a parvenu royalty—"

"Father—what horrid big words! I haven't an idea what they mean," the girl interrupted, "except that you're abusing Prince Louis, who is probably having a bad breakfast in that stuffy inn. Go along, father, bring him out to Roanoke, and we'll show him what Virginia breakfasts are like."

Colonel Hampton's sense of importance was tickled by the thought of having for a guest a scion of so famous a house; his genuine instinct of kindliness was aroused; moreover, time hung on his hands these late winter days, and the plan appealed to him as a diversion.

"Aaron, tell Sambo to saddle Thunder," he ordered.

Prince Louis, in his dingy parlor at the inn, looked at his visitor from between half-shut eyelids, and measured him, soul and body. He considered the invitation for a silent moment. This was one of the great men of the country. The Prince had already heard his name and the name of his historic home. It was well to have influential friends, more particularly as no letter awaited him as he had hoped from his uncle, Joseph Bonaparte, with the American introductions for which he had asked. A visit of a few days at this place of Roanoke could do no harm and might lead to good.

"I thank you very much, Monsieur le Colonel," he said gravely, yet graciously. "You are most good to desire that I visit you. I will do so with pleasure."

The people of Norfolk were awake to the fact

that an exiled Prince had suddenly dropped among them, and when an aquiline-faced, foreign-looking, small, young man rode out from the city by Colonel Hampton's side, sitting his horse like an accomplished cavalryman, more than one citizen turned to look with comprehending interest. To a southerner it would seem not out of proportion that the czar of Russia and the monarchs of England and France should together visit his city, and in offering them his best he would rest content as to their entertainment, which is surely the well-bred attitude. So that the good people of Norfolk who stopped to gaze a moment at the future Emperor of France, the kinsman of one of earth's greatest conquerors, were not unduly impressed. One and another lifted his hat and bowed deeply to Colonel Hampton with a smile of approval. It was right, it was traditional, that the Hamptons of Roanoke House should take charge of a distinguished stranger, and, moreover, it was extremely pleasant for the stranger. And impassive Prince Louis, who appeared to look at nothing, missed neither the self-respecting interest of the citizens in himself, nor their profounder sense of the importance of his host. Very little passed within range of those dull gray eyes which

was not filed away for reference in the mind behind the mask.

Out they rode through the sun-lighted, wind-whipped country, dozing restfully through its last winter's nap, stirring already at the step of lively April on the threshold. The air was sharp, and nipped at the Prince's fingers and toes, but it was exhilaration to be across a horse again, and the exile's spirit—the case-hardened heart of steel which failure and misfortune never broke till it broke forever at Sedan—grew buoyant. That "something about the outside of a horse which is good for the inside of a man" worked its subtle charm on this finished horseman and horse lover, and he was gently responsive as the colonel talked fluently on.

It was of his own affairs that the colonel talked, of his thousands of acres, his hundreds of slaves, his methods, his crops, his tobacco, and then of his family and their history here in Virginia, and at last, most absorbing topic of all, he talked of himself. He explained to the Prince how it was that he came to speak French so well, and not a gleam in the filmy gray gaze betrayed the Prince's opinion. But a pause came in the stream of words, and Prince Louis' resonant voice filled it.

"Does it so happen, Monsieur le Colonel, that there is in these parts a Frenchman of—of instruction—a man whom I might use as a secretary? I shall have need to-morrow to write letters. Would you know of such a man, Monsieur le Colonel?"

Nothing pleased Monsieur le Colonel more than to be master of the situation. "Most certainly," he answered blandly and felt that the Prince must notice how no demand could find Colonel Hampton at a loss. "Most certainly. My daughter's French master would be the very fellow. He is intelligent and well educated, and what is more, he is a most ardent adherent of your family, Prince. He has talked to Miss Hampton with such a vehement enthusiasm that, by the Lord Harry, I believe she expects to see you fly in with wings, sir—I believe she does," and the colonel laughed loudly and heartily. It was as good a joke as he had ever made.

A vague movement twisted the muscles of the Prince's mouth, but it was a regretful smile. He was wondering if the inn parlor would not have been better than this fine landscape and good horse with Colonel Hampton's steady conversation. But he had plenty of French politeness. "It is good of Mademoiselle to give me her favor," he said graciously. "Mademoiselle is young—a little girl?"

"Ho—ho! Not at all! Far from it. You'll find it dangerous to say that to Miss Hampton herself, Prince. She would most likely answer something saucy to convince you of her antiquity. Sixteen she is, and our southern girls mature young. According to my fancy she is of a marriageable age, and I will tell you in confidence, sir, what I would not tell every man—I have selected the man she is to marry."

"Ah!" the Prince murmured. Certainly the inn parlor would have been better than confidences. And then, as the colonel's air seemed to demand something, "Is it known who is to be the happy man?"

The colonel pursed his lips, and shook his head slowly. "Well," he said deliberately, "well, it certainly is not known in general."

"A thousand pardons!" Prince Louis hastened to say. "I am far from demanding your family secrets, Monsieur. I simply—how do you say it?—made conversation. Shall we not talk of the country, Monsieur?"

But the colonel felt an expansion of brotherly love toward this quiet young man with the mighty background, who would not lift a finger to impress him. The deep and genuine haughtiness so care-

fully hidden under his gentle manner had its effect on the soul which spread its wares ever before the world. He was conscious of a desire to become intimate with his guest. He turned and laid a hand on the other's arm, blandly ignorant that the muscles tightened against it.

"Not at all, not at all, Prince. I feel it an honor that I should be able to impart to you, and I know that I am safe in imparting to you the arrangement of a family alliance. My daughter Lucy, although she herself does not as yet know it, is destined to become the wife of the oldest son of my cousin, Carter Hampton, himself my namesake, Henry Hampton the fifth. His estate, my cousin Carter, his father, being dead, adjoins my own, and this marriage will unite the two places under the old name, a most fortunate circumstance in these days of changing houses and broken fortunes, you will admit."

The colonel, with his whole soul on his own affairs, did not think of a house, better known than his, whose broken fortune knew no immediate hope of healing, but the heir of the house smiled another ghost of a smile. The voice flowed on.

"The young man himself is in every way deserving of even so brilliant a match as this. He is a

man of parts and has traveled in foreign countries. He is of an attractive personality—in fact"—the colonel smirked—"in fact, my flatterers say that he resembles me strikingly."

"One could ask no more," Prince Louis answered neatly, and the colonel was satisfied.

And before them, at that moment, rose a stately picture. A large old house, built of dark red brick brought from England, towered suddenly from out of the bare trees of its park like a monument of calm hospitality. Its steep roof was set with dormer windows; its copings and its casements were white stone; a white stone terrace stretched before it. At one front, as they came, was the carriage entrance, and the squares of a formal English garden, walled with box hedges, lay sleeping before the springtime; at the opposite side a wide lawn fell to a massive brick wall, spaced with stone pillars, guarding the grounds from the flowing of the James River. General Hampton gazed at the home of his people and then at his guest, and he cast the harness of his smallnesses and stood out in the simple and large cordiality which is the heritage above others of southern people.

"You are welcome to Roanoke, Prince," he said.

CHAPTER XXXI

BROTHERS

COLONEL HAMPTON'S study was dark from floor to ceiling with brown oak wainscoting and was lightened by a dull brightness of portraits. An ancestor in a scarlet coat, the red turned yellow and brown with time; an ancestress in dimmed glory of blue satin and lace and pearls; a judge in his wig and gown, gave the small room importance. A broad window looked through bare branches, lacy-black against sky, across a rolling country and groups of woodland.

On the morning of the first day of April, 1837, Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte stood at this window, staring at brown fields and trying to trace a likeness between this new world and the ancient country which he called his; France, where, since he was seven years old, he had been allowed to spend but a few weeks; France, which had freshly exiled him; France, the thought of which ruled him, as he meant one day to rule her; France, for whom he

was eating his heart out to-day, as always, thousands of miles from her shores. His gaze grew introspective; in a long panorama he saw the scenes of his picturesque life—surely a life of heights and depths such as few have known. Dimly he remembered the gorgeousness of his uncle's court, himself conspicuous there— a little lad of five—a princeling whose birth had been celebrated by one hundred and twenty millions of people, in twenty tongues and dialects; vaguely he felt the agitated atmosphere of the Hundred Days; of the time when he and his brother, in hiding with their mother's dressmaker, had trodden Paris streets as children of the people. And then came his theatrical escape, with mother and brother, into an exile lasting unbroken for fifteen years.

He recalled the happy life at Arenenberg, in Switzerland, and the work and play and soldierly training which all pointed, in the boy's mind, to one end—to serve France—a service which did not at that time mean sovereignty, for the Duke of Reichstadt, Napoleon's son, was alive and the head of the house of Bonaparte. He thought of his short career, his and his well-beloved brother's together, with the Italian insurgents against the Austrians, and the lonely man's heart longed for his own people as he

went over again that time of excitement and sorrow, ending with the older boy's death at Forli and his own illness and narrow escape from capture.

"What a mother!" he cried aloud, tossing up his hands with French demonstrativeness, as the memory came to him of the days in Ancona when he lay at death's door, hidden in the very room next that of the Austrian general, saved only at last by the marvelous mother's wit and courage. The journey through Italy to France, that was drama enough for one life. Recognized at every turn, betrayed never, and ending with—Prince Louis smiled his slow dim smile—a fitting ending indeed to days whose every minute was adventure. He thought of the landlord of the inn, the old cavalryman; the young Frenchman—Beaupré—that was the name; it was set in his memory; it had been in that tenacious memory since an afternoon of 1824, when a runaway schoolboy prince had slipped over the Jura, and played with three other children, about a ruined castle; he saw François Beaupré take reverently in his hand the sword which Napoleon had held—and then the alarm! That was a fine sight—the dash of the youngster through the startled mob of Austrians; the flying leap to the horse; the skirmish to get free, and, at last, the rush of the chase. He had seen it

all, watching quietly while his mother and the landlord implored him to hide himself. That young Frenchman—if he should be alive—if ever he should meet him again Prince Louis would not forget. It was psychological that he should have been thinking this when a knock sounded deferentially on the door of the room. But picturesque coincidences happen in lives as well as on the stage; in Louis Napoleon's there was more than one. *"Entrez!"* he called sharply, and then, "Come in!"

The door swung slowly and Aaron, white-aproned and white-eyeballed, stood in it.

"Marse Prince," he stated with a dignity of service which crowned heads could not daunt, "ole Marse sen' me bring you dis hyer Marse Gopray."

A light figure stepped before the black and white of Aaron, and halted, and bowed profoundly. The light from the window shone on the face and the dark immense eyes that lifted toward Prince Louis, and for a moment he stared, puzzled. Was he in the present? Surely this man was part of the past which he had been reviewing. Surely he had played a rôle in the Prince's history—where? With a flashing thought into the years he knew.

"Mon ami!" cried Louis Bonaparte, and sprang forward and stretched out both hands, his royalty

forgotten in the delight of seeing a face which recalled his youth and his mother.

François, two minutes later, found himself standing, bursting with loyalty and pride, with the Prince's hands clasping his, and the Prince's transformed face beaming on him.

"You rode like the devil," said the Prince. "But the Austrians had the horses. That poor Bleu-bleu! How did you get away? Where have you been? *Mon Dieu,* but we looked for you, Zappi and I!"

"But no, your Highness, I did not get away," smiled François Beaupré as if imparting a joyful bit of news. "They caught me."

And he told briefly his story of the five years in prison, of the desperate escape, of the rescue and voyage to America, of his wrecked health, not yet reestablished. Through the account shone the unconquerable French gaiety. Another thing there was which a Frenchman and a Bonaparte could not fail to see—that the thought of his service to the house of Bonaparte had been a sustaining pride, and the hope of future service an inspiring hope. With entire faith in his own mission, held to through years of trial, Prince Louis knew the key-note of that faith, and heard its sound like music through the other man's words. Here also was a life with a guiding

star, and his spirit stirred to see that the star which led the other was his own. That currents, which would one day meet in the great river of his power, ran underground through the world, was part of his belief; here was one of them. Who knew what this man was fated to mean to him? Three times already he had dropped into his path from a clear sky; twice he had saved his life by headlong eager sacrifice, and here, thousands of miles from those scenes, the light figure, the startling eyes appeared to him again, at another time of deep discouragement. It seemed a happy omen; superstition and gratitude laid hold together on the Prince's troubled mind. He threw himself back into Colonel Hampton's leather arm-chair, throne-like in impressiveness and size; the mask of impassivity closed on his colorless features.

"Sit there, Monsieur," he ordered, "and tell me your life."

Simply, yet dramatically as was his gift, the young man went over the tale which he had told to Lucy Hampton, that and more. And the Prince listened to every word. He, too, had the French sensitiveness to theatrical effect, and his overwrought imagination seemed to see the hand of destiny visibly joining this story to his. Here was a

legacy from Napoleon; an instrument created by his uncle, which he, the heir, should use. Already the man had proved that he brought good fortune; already he had deserved well of the Bonapartes; already his entire confidence in the return of the family to their own had cheered the lonely Prince beyond belief. There was a long silence when François had finished, and Louis' deep-pitched voice broke it.

"'One day perhaps a Marshal of France under another Bonaparte,'" he repeated thoughtfully. "It was the accolade, the old right of royalty," and gazed, as if reflecting, at the other man's face.

Heightened color told how much it meant to François Beaupré to hear those words spoken by the Prince. He waited a moment before he answered.

"May the God above kings bring your Highness to your throne," he said low, as if the weight of the wish hushed him. "That I should be a Marshal of your Highness' empire is not of importance, yet it was the prophecy of the Emperor. It will happen— I believe it will happen as surely as your Highness will be Emperor."

That one man, not a great man, should say such words seems a little thing to influence the mind of a personage such as was Louis Napoleon even in his

dark days. But his mind was thirsty for such words, and such a confidence to reinforce his own. The failure at Strasburg had been a bitter blow, and his later trial and condemnation to exile, pluckily as he had borne it, had shaken his courage; the four months at sea had been solitary, the landing in an unknown country without friends or resources was hard and lonely. It seemed as if a sword were fitted into his empty hand as he watched the illuminated face of this man and listened to the words which breathed sure trust in a destiny, that was the destiny of both.

Since the world began, in the ranks of men there have been those whom the world has laughed at, persecuted and followed. It is they who, stepping out of the lines where the multitude marks time, rush forward, often to pitfalls, to sudden graves; sometimes to heights where men see and admire, and follow in herds. If the first, they are despised and forgotten, but if the other, they are discoverers, inventors, heroes. Yet there is the same enthusiasm and the same stress in the hearts of those who succeed and of those who fail; there is for both the vision which duller eyes do not see, the beautiful, unattainable for which one must risk everything. These are the dreamers, the fanatics, perhaps, and perhaps they move the world. To François Beaupré

a wide dream of power and happiness for Fran took concrete form in the name of the Emper whose looming personality had brushed his chil hood. To his mind—the mind of a devotee—th touch had sealed his years to the service of th family which meant for him France's greatness.

As the man who was to be Napoleon III. gaz dully out toward the dull fields, to all seeming co and apathetic, the other began to speak again, h face working, his tones trembling.

"My Prince, I will tell you—though it may b of little moment to know—that it is not for my ow advancement that I care. It is the truth that I wou throw away a hundred lives if I had them, to se the house of Bonaparte rule France. It is only s I believe, that France can become great once mor We need heroes to lead us, we Frenchmen, not sho keeper kings such as Louis Phillipe; if it has not hero the nation loses courage, and its interest i national life. But the very name of Napoleon i inspiration—it pricks the blood; a monarch of th name on France's throne, and our country will wak will live. You, my Prince, are the hope of th house of Napoleon."

With a quick step forward he threw himself o his knees before the quiet figure in the throne-lik

hair; he seized the Prince's hand and, head bent, kissed it with passion. There was a line of color in each cheek as his face lifted, and his brilliant look was shot with a tear.

"If I may die believing that I have helped to win your throne, I shall die in happiness."

Prince Louis had his mother's warm heart, and his went to it. He put his hand on the other's shoulder, familiarly as if the two were equals, kinsmen.

"*Mon ami,*" he said kindly, "do not speak of dying for me—live for me—that is better. We will rise together. Remember, we were brothers for some days; remember, I twice owe you my life; also I can not forget that it was in the uniform of my own dead brother you risked yourself for me. Luck will turn—we both believe it, and you shall be, as the Emperor said, 'a Marshal of France under another Bonaparte.'" The laconic Prince had found language—he was talking, with unused freedom. He went on. "The sovereignty of the people was consecrated in France by the most powerful revolution the world has ever seen. I stand for the rights deposited by the people in the hands of my family—the rights which the nation has never revoked."

The brotherly touch on François' shoulder was

withdrawn, and with gentle dignity, with a glance the Prince lifted him to his feet, and François stood happy, dazed, before him. He found himself telling his plans, his methods, his efforts to fit himself for the usefulness that might be on the way.

"I have studied enormously, my Prince. All known books on warlike subjects, all I could borrow or steal I have studied. Ah, yes! I know much of those things."

Louis Bonaparte, with an exhaustive military education, a power of application and absorption beyond most men in Europe, let the gleam of a smile escape. He listened with close attention while François told of his organization of the youth of the neighborhood into a cavalry company, and of their drill twice a week.

"And you are the captain, Monsieur?"

François smiled a crafty, worldly-wise smile—or perhaps it was as if a child would seem crafty and worldly-wise. "No, my Prince," he answered, shaking his head sagely. "That would not be best. I am little known, a foreigner. They think much of their old families, the people of these parts. So that it is better for the success of the company that the captain should be of the nobility of the country.

One sees that. So the captain of the company is Monsieur Henry Hampton, the younger, the kinsman of Monsieur le Colonel, and a young man of great goodness, and the best of friends to me. Everything that I can do for his pleasure is my own pleasure."

The Prince turned his expressionless gaze on the animated face. "Mademoiselle Lucy likes the young monsieur?"

"But yes, my Prince—she likes every one, Mademoiselle Lucy. It is sunshine, her kindness; it falls everywhere and blesses where it falls. She loves Henry—as a brother."

"As a brother!" the Prince repeated consideringly. "Yes, a brother. You find Mademoiselle Lucy of—of a kind disposition."

"Beyond words, and most charming," François answered steadily, and flushed a little. He felt himself being probed. With that the facile, mysterious, keen mind of the Prince leaped, it seemed, a world-wide chasm. "That most winning little girl of the ruined château of Vicques—our playmate Alixe—you remember how she stated, 'I am Alixe,' and was at once shipwrecked with embarrassment?"

"I remember," François said shortly, and was

conscious that he breathed quickly and that his throat was dry, and that the Prince knew of both troubles.

"Is she still 'Alixe'—the same Alixe?" inquired the Prince, turning ostentatiously to the window. "Has she grown up as sweet and fresh and brilliant a flower as the rosebud promised?"

François, hearing his own heart beat, attempted to answer in a particularly casual manner, which is a difficult and sophisticated trick. He failed at it. "They say—I think—she has—oh, but yes, and—I think"—he stammered and the Prince cut short his sufferings. "Ah, yes! I see that it is with you, as with Monsieur Henry, a case of devoted brotherhood. You love her as a brother—you will not boast of her.

"You have done well, Chevalier Beaupré. You have done so well that when the time is ripe again—it will not be long—for Strasburg must be wiped out in success—that I shall send for you to help me, and I shall know that you will be ready. I see that the star which leads us both is the only light which shines for you. It holds your undivided soul, Chevalier—I am right?"

François turned his swiftly changing face toward the speaker, drawn with a feeling which swept over

him; for a moment he did not answer. Then he spoke in a low tone.

"When a knight of the old time went to battle," he said, "he wore on his helmet the badge of his lady and carried the thought of her in his heart. A man fights better so."

And the silent Prince understood.

CHAPTER XXXII

HOW LUCY TOLD

THE Prince was gone. There had been festivities and formalities, great dinners, gatherings of the Virginia nobility to do honor to his highness at Roanoke House and elsewhere; everywhere the Chevalier Beaupré had been distinguished by his highness' most marked favor. And Lucy Hampton's eyes had shone with quiet delight to see it and to see the effect on her father. For the colonel, confused in his mind as to how it might be true, reluctantly acknowledged that there must be something of importance about this Chevalier Beaupré that a Prince should treat him as a brother. He believed that it would be best to treat him—he also—at least as a gentleman. So the French lessons were continued and the Jefferson Troop was encouraged, and François was asked often to Roanoke House. And as the months rolled on he tried with every thoughtful and considerate effort to express to the

little lady of the manor his gratitude for the goodness of her family. It troubled him more than a little that the early friendliness and intimacy of Harry Hampton seemed to be wearing off. The boy did not come so often to Carnifax, and when he came he did not stay for hours, for days sometimes, as was his way at first. He was uneasy with his friend; and his friend wondered and did not understand, but hesitated to push a way into the lad's heart. "He will tell me in time," thought François, and, sure of his own innocence, waited for the time.

Meanwhile he was going home. Going, much against the advice of the Norfolk doctor, who warned him that he was not yet well or strong, that the out-of-door life in the mild Virginia climate should be continued perhaps for two years more, before he went back to the agitation and effort of a Bonapartist agent in France. But he could not wait; he must see his old home, his mother, his father, and all the unforgotten faces. He longed to watch the black lashes curl upward from the blue of Alixe's eyes. He longed to hear her clear voice with its boyish note of courage. It would put new life into him, that voice. It was seven years now and more since he had left them all at a day's notice to go to Pietro in Italy—to a living death of five years, to

many undreamed of happenings. The fever was on him and he must go home.

There was to be a celebration for the new and very fashionable cavalry troop of which François was the unofficial backbone and author. In the great grassy paddock at Bayly's Folly the proud mother of eighteen-year-old Caperton Bayly—first lieutenant, and the most finished horseman in the Virginia county—had invited the gentry from miles about to feast with her and to watch her son and his friends show how the Chevalier Beaupré had made them into soldiers. They came in shoals, driving from far off over bad roads in big lurching chariots, or riding in gay companies, mostly of older men and girls and young boys, because all of the gilded youth were in the ranks that day.

The day was perfect; a day remembered in that part of Virginia among the great families who came to see their boys ride. Yeardleys and Carters and Littletons and Letchers and Bowmans were there; and Joyneses and Harrisons and Bowdoins and Castleburys and Churchills and Wises and Fitchetts and Stewarts and Wards—and the rest of them, names there in Virginia when Charles I. was king. The big carriages were drawn up in a massive line and the horsemen and horsewomen stood about pictur-

esquely in and out of the saddle, talking, watching, admiring the surprising military things which their sons and brothers and sweethearts were doing. And the lads went through their drill nobly, and the stalwart body of men and horse-flesh formed in fours, in twos, melted into long-drawn lines, wound into close concentric circles and unwound again, and charged and dismounted and leaped into the saddle, at Harry Hampton's shouts of command, with surprising accuracy; also to the unbounded pride of François, who, in the ranks, watched every evolution, every move of every rider, with anxious delight. They did wonders; the horses were on their best behavior and pushed into the places they had learned so eagerly that the riders needed hardly to guide them at all; the whole graceful, inspiring exhibition of strength and skill and youth and vigor went without a fault. Harry Hampton, flushed with deep pleasure at this first trial of strength of his life where he had been leader, was so happy that François almost forgot to gallop to the head of the line when his turn came, for joy of looking at him. Then the drill was over and there was to be rough riding and jumping. Hurdles were swiftly dragged out and placed in a manner of ring.

"This one is very close to the bank," said Lucy

Hampton, standing by Bluebird and watching as the negroes placed the bars. "If a horse refused and turned sharp and was foolish, he might go over. And the bank is steep."

"Lucy, you are a grandmotherly person," Clifford Stewart—who was another girl—threw at her. "You would like them all to ride in wadded wool dressing-gowns, and to have a wall padded with cotton batting to guard them." And Lucy smiled and believed herself overcautious.

The excited horses came dancing up to the barriers and lifted and were over, with or without rapping, but not one, for the first round, refusing. Then the bars were raised six inches; six inches in mid-air is a large space when one must jump it. Caperton Bayly went at it first; his mother watched breathless as he flew forward, sitting erect, intense, his young eyes gleaming. Over went his great horse Traveler, and over the next and the next—all of them; but the white heels had struck the top bar twice—the beautiful, spirited performance was not perfect. Harry Hampton came next; all of the kindly multitude gazed eagerly, hoping that the boy to whom life had given less than the others might win this honor he wanted. The first bars without rapping; the second; and a suppressed sound of sat-

isfaction, which might soon be a great roar of pleasure, hummed over the field. Black Hawk came rushing, snorting, pulling up to the third jump, the jump where Lucy stood. And as he came a little girl, high in a carriage, a chariot as one said then, flourished her scarlet parasol in the air, and lost hold of it, and it flew like a huge red bird into the course, close to the hurdle. And Black Hawk, strung to the highest point of his thoroughbred nerves, saw, and a horror of the flaming living thing, as it seemed, caught him, and he swerved at the bar and bolted—bolted straight for the steep slope.

A gasp went up from the three hundred, four hundred people; the boy was dashing to death; no one stirred; every muscle was rigid—the spectators were paralyzed. Not all. François from his babyhood had known how to think quickly, and these boys were his pride and his care; he had thought of that possible danger which Lucy had foreseen; when the jumping began, mounted on his mare Aquarelle, he was posted near the head of the slope, not twenty yards from the hurdle, to be at hand in any contingency. When Harry's horse bolted, one touch put Aquarelle into motion. Like a line of brown light she dashed at right angles to the runaway—a

line drawn to intercept the line of Black Hawk's flight. There was silence over the field—one second—two seconds—the lines shot to the angle—then it came—the shock they awaited.

Black Hawk, rushing, saw the other coming and swerved at the last moment—too late. The animals collided, not with full force, yet for a moment it looked like nothing but death for riders and mounts. Harry Hampton was thrown backward to the level field; Black Hawk galloped off, frantic and unhurt, across it; Aquarelle, one saw, lay on the very edge of the drop and was scrambling to her feet with liveliness enough to assure her safety; of François there was no sign. In half a minute the breathless still crowd was in an uproar, and a hundred men were jostling one another to reach the scene of the accident.

It was two minutes, perhaps, before Caperton Bayly, with a negro boy at his heels, with Jack Littleton and Harry Wise and a dozen other lads racing back of him, had plunged over the drop of land where François had disappeared. Two minutes are enough sometimes for a large event. In that two minutes Lucy Hampton, without conscious volition, by an instinct as simple and imperative as a bird's instinct to shield her young, had slipped from her

horse Bluebird and flown across the level and down over the steep bank till she found herself holding François' dark head in her arms and heard her own voice saying words she had never said even to herself.

"I love you, I love you," she said, and if all the world heard she did not know or care. There was no world for her at that minute but the man lying with his head against her heart—dead it might be, but dead or alive, dearest. "I love you—love you—love you," she repeated, as if the soul were rushing out of her in the words.

With that the luminous great eyes opened, and François was looking at her, and she knew that he had heard. And then the training of a lifetime, of centuries, flooded back into her, and womanly reticence and maidenly shame and the feelings and attitude which are not primeval, as she had been primeval for that one mad moment. She drew back as she felt him trying to lift himself, and left him free and was on her feet, and then with a shock she was aware of another presence; turning she looked up into the angry glow of her cousin's eyes. He was not looking at her, but at the man who, dazed, hurt, was trying painfully to pull himself up. Harry Hampton glared at him.

"We will settle this later," he brought out through his teeth. "I hope I can kill you." And Lucy cried out:

"Shame!" she cried. "He has just saved your life!"

"Damn him!" said Harry Hampton. "I do not want my life at his hands. I hate him more for saving me. Damn him!"

And François, clutching at a bush, things reeling about him unsteadily, looked up, friendly, wistful, at the boy cursing him.

With that there was an influx of population; the whole world, apparently, tumbled down the steep bank, every one far too preoccupied with help for the hero to remark Harry Hampton's grim humor.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE FINEST THINGS

ENDURANCE, François' own negro boy, brought a note to Roanoke House on a morning five days after. It read:

'My Dear Miss Hampton:

"The doctor has given me permission to ride tomorrow and I wish to ride to Roanoke House before all other places. Will Mademoiselle see me? Will Mademoiselle permit me to see her for a short time alone? I await anxiously a word from you, and I am your servant, Francois Beaupre."

Mademoiselle sent a fair sheet of paper with a few unsteady scratches across it, and sat down to live over night, a hard business at times. But it was accomplished. The colonel had ridden to Norfolk for the day—had François known of that, one wonders? Lucy, waiting in that small stately study with the dim portraits and the wide vague view across the fields of the James River, heard the gay hoof

beats of Aquarelle pound down the gravel under the window, heard François' deep gentle voice as he gave the horse to Sambo, and waited one minute more, the hardest minute of all. Then the door had opened and he stood there—the miracle, as it seems at such moments to a woman, possibly to a man—of all the gifts and qualities worth loving.

The light on the thick bronzed hair with its dramatic white lock, the diagonal of fresh color across the dark face, the wonderful brilliant eyes, the strong leanness of his hands—there was something in each detail, as the two gazed at each other in a short silence, which caught at Lucy's soul. That he was short, and so unlike all the men she had admired before, was somehow an added charm. The compact light figure seemed worth a hundred big hulks of men. The injured arm in its sling gave her a pang of tenderness, a thrill of eagerness to do anything, everything for him. A tumult of these thoughts and a thousand others beat about her as François stood grave, alert, in the doorway. Then he had made his precise bow, and she had heard his voice saying gently, "Good morning, Mademoiselle," and the door was closed; and they were alone together. In a flash she felt that it could not be endured, that she must escape. She rose hastily.

"I'm sorry I must go; I can not stay—"

But François had laughed and taken her hand and was holding it with a tender force which thrilled her. He understood. She knew he understood the shame and fear of a woman who has given love unasked; she was safe in his hands; she knew that. With a sigh she let her fingers rest in his and sat down again and waited.

"Dear Mademoiselle Lucy," said the deep kind voice, "my first friend in Virginia, my comrade, my little scholar—"

Why did Lucy grow cold and quiet at these words of gentleness? François was sitting beside her, holding her hand in both his, gazing at her with the clearest affection in his look. Yet she braced herself against she did not know what. The voice went on with its winning foreign inflections, its slip of English now and then, and its never-to-be-described power of reaching the heart.

"See, Mademoiselle," said François, "we are too real friends, you and I, to have deception between us. We will not pretend, you and I, to each other —is it not, Mademoiselle? Therefore I shall not try to hide from you that I heard that day those words so wonderful which you spoke to me so unworthy. I have thought of those words ever since,

Mademoiselle, as I lay ill with this troublesome arm; ever since—all the time. My heart has been full of a—gratification to you which can not be told. I shall remember all my life; I shall be honored as no king could honor me, by those words. And because you have so touched me, and have so laid that little hand on the heart of me, I am going to tell you, my dear comrade and scholar, what is most secret and most sacred to me."

Lucy's hand in his stiffened, but yet she did not draw it away. François had not begun the way a lover begins—she felt that surely—but—it was François. What faithfulness and truth there was in any one answered always to the truth and faithfulness of this man. In Lucy Hampton there was much of both; she left her hand lying between the strong hands of the man who did not love her.

In as few words as might be, he told her of the peasant child who had been lifted out of his poverty-bound life with such large kindliness that no bond which held him to that poor, yet dear life had been broken; who had been left all the love of his first home and yet been given a home and a training and an education which set him ready for any career; he told of the big-souled, blunt, Napoleonic officer, the seigneur; of the gray, red-roofed castle, with its

four round towers; of handsome silent Pietro, and of the unfailing long kindness of them all. Then, his voice lowered, holding the girl's hand still, he told her of Alixe, of the fairy child who had met him on that day of his first visit and had brought him to her father, the seigneur. He described a little the playmate of his childhood, fearless, boyish in her intrepid courage, yet always exquisitely a girl. He told of the long summer vacations of the three as they grew up, and the rides in the Jura valley, and of that last ride when he knew that he was to go to Italy next morning, and of how he had faced the seigneur and told him that he loved his daughter and had given her up then, instantly, for loyalty to him and to Pietro. And then he told her of the peasant boy in Riders' Hollow in the gray morning light after the night of his escape—and how, by hand on the bridle and seat in the saddle, and at last by the long curl of the black lashes he had known the peasant boy for Alixe.

Lucy Hampton, listening, was so thrilled with this romance of a lifelong love that she could silence her aching heart and her aching pride and could be—with a painful sick effort—but yet could be, utterly generous. There is no midway in such a case between entire selfishness and entire selflessness. The

young southern girl, wounded, shamed, cruelly hurt in vanity and in love, was able to choose the larger way, and taking it, felt that sharp joy of renunciation which is as keen and difficult to breathe and as sweet in the breathing as the air of a mountain-top. Trembling, she put her other little hand on François' hands.

"I see," she said, and her voice shook and she smiled mistily, but very kindly. "You could not love any one but that beautiful Alixe. I—I would not have you."

And François bent hastily, with tears in his eyes, and kissed the warm little hands. The uncertain sliding voice went on.

"I am not—ashamed—that I said that—to you. I would not have said it—not for worlds. I—thought you were killed. I—didn't know what I said. But I am not ashamed. I am glad that I—am enough of a person to have known—the finest things—and"—her voice sank and she whispered the next words over the dark head bent on her hands—"and to have loved them. But don't bother. I shall—get over it."

The liquid tones choked a bit on that and François lifted his head quickly and his eyes flamed at her. "Of course you will, my dear little girl, my

brave Mademoiselle. It is not as you think; it is not serious, *mon amie.* It is only that your soul is full of kindness and enthusiasm and eagerness to stand by the unlucky. I am alone and expatriated; I have had a little of misfortune and you are sorry for me. It is that. Ah, I know. I am very old and wise, me. It would never do," he went on. "The noblesse of Virginia would rise in a revolution if it should be that the princess of Roanoke House gave her heart to a French peasant. I am come to be a man of knowledge—" And he shook his head with as worldly-wise an expression as if one of Guido Reni's dark angels should talk politics. He went on again, smiling a little, an air of daring in his manner. "Moreover, Mademoiselle Miss Lucy, there is a fairy prince who awaits only the smallest sign from you."

Lucy smiled. "No," she said. And then, "A fairy prince—in Virginia?"

"Ah, yes, Mademoiselle Miss Lucy. Of the true noblesse, that one. A fine, big, handsome prince, the right sort."

"Who?" demanded Lucy, smiling still.

"Of such a right sort indeed that it is no matter —ah, no, but perhaps just the thing to make one love him more, that he is lame."

"Harry!" Lucy's smile faded.

"But yes, indeed, *mon amie,*" and François patted the little hand with his big one. "Henry, indeed. Henry, who is waiting to kill me for love of you; Henry, the best truest fellow, the manliest bravest fellow. Who rides like Henry? Who has read all the books in all the libraries like Henry? Who is respected by the old men, the great men, for his knowledge and his thinking and his statecraft almost—like Henry? Who has such a great heart and brain and such fearless courage as Henry?"

Lucy listened to this eulogium rather astonished. It strikes a girl as absurd often, when a brother or a cousin is pointed out as a personage. But it pleased her; yet she did not say so. "Harry is a good boy," she spoke calmly, "but—but it is only for convenience, for joining the lands, that he and my father wish us to marry. I will not marry a man to shape some fields of corn."

François answered gravely. "But no, Mademoiselle, never must you do that. It is not the case, however, that your cousin cares about the shape of corn fields. He is not interested in that. If you had no corn fields, if you had nothing whatever, Mademoiselle Lucy, he would give his life to marry you just the same. It is you whom he loves and not

corn fields, of any shape at all. Also he loves you to madness. For that he has hated me—me full of gratification to him forever—because he has believed that I would try to win from him your heart. Mademoiselle Miss Lucy, I could not do that if I might. If my life were not as I have told you I could not play him false, my Henry—that dear boy who wishes to kill me." François smiled a little, half amused, half wistful. "And in all case," he went on, "what chance should I have in the end against that splendid Henry Hampton? Mademoiselle, you will thank me so one day that it will be very painful to me, for showing you how it was not François Beaupré, the Frenchman, but Henry Hampton, the Virginian, who was fitted to win that warm, generous, proud heart of mademoiselle."

"You are very loyal to your friends," Lucy said, half pleased, half stabbed to the soul.

"Certainly. What for is gratification worth, otherwise?" François threw at her earnestly. There were a few English words too much for him still; "gratitude" seemed to be one. He stood up and his great eyes glowed down at her. "Mademoiselle," he said, "two women of earth, my mother and Alixe, are for me the Madonnas, the crown of women," and his glance lifted to the ceiling as if to Heaven, with-

out pose, unconscious—a look no American could ever have worn. "And, *voilà*, Mademoiselle, my little scholar will always stand next to and close to them." He bent over her hand and his lips touched it long and tenderly. "Is it right between us, *mon amie?* Are we friends always? It is indeed so for life with me."

And little Lucy felt a healing peace settling on her bruised feelings and heard herself saying generous words of friendship which healed also as she spoke them.

Then, "I must find that savage boy Henry, and beseech him to spare my life," spoke François at last. "My life is of more value to-day, that it possesses a sure friend in Mademoiselle Lucy," he said and smiled radiantly. And was gone.

Lucy, to her astonishment, felt light-hearted, felt as if moved into a large, clear, sunshiny atmosphere out of the stormy unrest which had lately held her. Also she found herself thinking over the astonishing things which François had said of her cousin Harry. It would seem indeed as if the undying love for the Chevalier Beaupré which had possessed her yesterday might, after all, have been a very young girl's infatuation for an older man, for a dramatic character—a manner of hero worship it

ıight have been. Such things happen. Lucy Hamp-
ɔn, level-headed as well as warm-hearted, began to
ːe in an unphrased way, even as soon as her knight
ad left her, that it might be so with her. And,
ɾith that thought, came the thought of Harry.

"He said—that Harry loved me! What non-
ense!" she whispered to herself. And the broken-
earted one was smiling.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ONCE MORE AT HOME

IN fewer words, with less told, François' straightforwardness metamorphosed the angry lad Harry Hampton into a follower more devoted than he had been even in the first flush of enthusiasm for his rescued prisoner. Again the boy dogged his footsteps and adored him frankly. And François, enchanted to be friends again with his friend, wondered at the goodness and generosity of the people of this world. It is roughly true that one finds life in general like a mirror; that if one looks into it with a smile and a cordial hand held out one meets smiles and outstretched hands in return. Through all his days it had happened so with this child of a French village.

So that when the day came at last when he stood once more on the deck of the *Lovely Lucy*, loaded with her cargo of tobacco for foreign ports, François felt as if he were leaving home and family. The long green carpet of the rolling lawn of Roan-

oke was crowded with people come to tell him good-by. All of his soldier boys were there, the lads trained by him, one and all ready to swear by him or to die for him. Lucy and Harry stood together, and the servants were gathered to do him honor, and people had ridden from all over the county for the farewell. His eyes dimmed with tears of gratefulness, he watched them as the gang-plank was drawn up and the sails caught the wind and the ship swung slowly out into the stream.

"Come back again—come back again," they called from the shore.

François heard the deep tones of the lads and the rich voices of the negroes and he knew that some there could not speak, even as he could not. So he waved his hat silently, and the ship moved faster and the faces on the lawn seemed smaller, farther away, and yet he heard those following voices calling to him, more faintly:

"Come back again—oh, come back again!"

And with that the negroes had broken into a melody, and the ship moved on to the wild sweet music. *Way down upon de S'wanee Ribber,* the negroes sang, and the ship was at the turn of the river. The stately walls of Roanoke House, the green slope crowded with figures of his friends, the

sparkling water-front—the current had swept away all of the picture and he could only hear that wailing music of the negroes' voices, lower, more fitful; and now it was gone. He had left Virginia; he was on his way to friends. And for all his joy of going, he was heavy-hearted for the leaving.

The weeks went slowly at sea, but after a while he had landed, was in France, was at Vicques. He had seen his mother, with her hair whitened by those years of his prison life—a happy woman now, full of business and responsibility, yet always with a rapt look in her face as of one who lived in a deep inner quiet. He had talked long talks with his prosperous father and slipped into his old place among his brothers and sisters, utterly refusing to be made a stranger or a great man. And over and over again he had told the story of his capture and the story of his escape and the story of the Count von Gersdorf's great fancy for the song which they all knew:

"De tous côte's l'on dit que je suis bête;
Cela se peut! Et cependant j'en ris."

Family, old friends who gathered to see the little François Beaupré who had gone so far from his village, all these hummed the song with him as he came to that part of his tale, and then roared with

laughter as he told over again how he had written it on the note left for the governor, the night of his escape. That was distinctly the best part of the chronicle of François, to the taste of the Jura peasants.

At the castle the returned wanderer picked up no less the thread dropped so suddenly seven years before. The general, to whom the boy seemed his boy risen from the dead, would hardly let him from his sight; Alixe kept him in a tingling atmosphere of tenderness and mockery and sisterly devotion, which thrilled him and chilled him and made him blissful and wretched by turns. The puzzle of Alixe was more unreadable than the puzzle of the sphinx to the three men who loved her, to her father and François and Pietro. The general and François spoke of it guardedly, in few words, once in a long time, but Pietro never spoke. Pietro was there often, yet more often away in London, where the exiled Mazzini, at the head of one wing of Italian patriots, lived and conspired. And other men appeared suddenly and disappeared at the château, and held conferences with the general and François in that large dim library where the little peasant boy had sat with his thin ankles twisted about the legs of his high chair, and copied the history

of Napoleon. These men paid great attention nowadays to the words of that peasant boy.

"As soon as you are a little stronger," they said, "there is much work for you to do," and the general would come in at that point with a growl like distant thunder.

"He is to rest," the general would order. "He is to rest till he is well. He has done enough; let the boy alone, you others."

But the time came, six months after his return, when François must be sent to visit the officers of certain regiments thought to be secretly Bonapartist; when only he, it was believed, could get into touch with them and tell them enough and not too much of the plans of the party, and find out where they stood and how much one might count on them. So, against the general's wish, François went off on a political mission. It proved more complicated than had seemed probable; he was gone a long time: he had to travel and endure exhausting experiences for which he was not yet fit. So that when he came home to Vicques, two months later, he was white and transparent and ill. And there were some of the mysterious men at the château to meet him, delighted, pitiless. Delighted with the work he had done, with his daring and finesse and success, with

out pity for his weakness, begging him to go at once on another mission. The general was firm as to that; his boy should not be hounded; he should stay at home in the quiet old château and get well. But the boy was restless; a fever of enthusiasm was on him and he wanted to do more and yet more for the Prince's work.

Moreover it was about as much misery as joy to be near Alixe. Every day he narrowly escaped taking her into his arms and telling her how he had loved her and did love her and would love her always, right or wrong, reasonable or unreasonable. It was almost more than he could do to resist that temptation at times. And at times it seemed that Alixe, with the swift lift of those long black lashes, and the blue gleam of her eyes into his—it seemed as if she were telling him not to resist any longer. He did not know; if he had been sure what sort of love that glance meant—if he had been sure it was not the sisterly sort—he was human—he could not, perhaps, have resisted. But Alixe was a thousand things in a minute; no one could be so alluring, so cold, so warm, so fascinating, so forbidding—all at once. How could François tell what was mask and what reality in the proud, sensitive, merry, brave personality which one saw? Yet for every

puzzling phase he loved her more and wanted her more. He had much better go on diplomatic missions than stay and ride through Valley Delesmontes on spring afternoons with the woman he loved and might not have.

At this point two things happened: Pietro came from London, and François, on the point of leaving for another secret errand, broke down and was ill. He lay in his bed in his room at the farmhouse, the low upper chamber looking out—through wide-open casement windows, their old leaded little panes of glass glittering from every uneven angle—looking out at broad fields and bouquets of chestnut trees, and far off, five miles away, at the high red roofs of the château of Vicques. And gazing so, he saw Pietro on old Capitaine, turn from the shady avenue of the chestnuts and ride slowly to the house. With that he heard his mother greeting Pietro below in the great kitchen, then the two voices—the deep one and the soft one—talking, talking, a long time. What could his mother and Pietro have to talk about so long? And then Pietro's step was coming up the narrow stair, and he was there, in the room.

"François," Pietro began in his direct fashion. "I think you must go back to Virginia."

François regarded him with startled eyes, saying nothing. There was a chill and an ache in his heart at the thought of yet another parting.

Pietro went on. "I have a letter from Harry Hampton. The place needs you; the people want you; and Harry and Miss Hampton say they will not be married unless you come to be best man at the wedding." François smiled. Pietro went on again. "Moreover, boy, François—you are not doing well here. You are too useful; they want to use you constantly and you are ready; but you are not fit. You must get away for another year or two. Then you will be well and perhaps by then the Prince will have real work for you. And you must have strength for that time. Your mother says I am right." With that his mother stood in the doorway, regarding him with her calm eyes, and nodded to Pietro's words. So it came about that François went back shortly to Virginia.

On the day before he went he sat in the garden of the château with Alixe, on the stone seat by the sun-dial where they had sat years before when the general had seen him kiss the girl's hand, in that unbrotherly way which had so surprised him.

"Alixe," said François, "I am going to the end of the world."

"Not for the first time," Alixe answered cheerfully.

"Perhaps for the last," François threw back dramatically. It is hard to have one's best-beloved discount one's tragedies. And Alixe laughed and lifted a long stem of a spring flower which she held in her hand, and brushed his forehead delicately with the distant tip of it.

"Smooth out the wrinkles, do not frown; do not look solemn; you always come back, Monsieur the Bad Penny; you will this time. Do not be melodramatic, François."

François, listening to these sane sentiments, was hurt, and not at all inspired with cheerfulness. "Alixe," he said—and knew that he should not say it—"there is something I have wanted all my life—all my life."

"Is there?" inquired Alixe in commonplace tones. "A horse, *par exemple?*" He caught her hand, disregarding her tone; his voice was full of passion and pleading. "Do not be heartless and cold to-day, Alixe, dear Alixe. I am going so far, and my very soul is torn with leaving you—all."

It takes no more than a syllable, an inflection at times, to turn the course of a life. If François had left his sentence alone before that last little word;

if he had told the girl that his soul was torn with leaving *her*, then it is hard to say what might have happened. But—"you all"—he did not wish then to have her think that it meant more to leave her than to leave the others. Alixe readjusted the guard which had almost slipped from her, and stood again defensive.

"I won't be cruel, François; you know how we —all—are broken-hearted to have you go."

François caught that fatal little word "all," repeated, and dimly saw its significance, and his own responsibility. Alixe went on.

"I wonder if I do not know—what it is—that you have wanted all your life."

Eagerly François caught at her words. "May I tell you Alixe, Alixe?"

"No." Alixe spoke quickly. "No, let me guess. It is—it is"—and François, catching his breath, tried to take the word from her, but she stopped him. "No, I must—tell it. You have wished—all your life"—Alixe was breathing rather fast—"that —I should care for—Pietro."

A cold chill at hearing that thing said in that voice seized him. Very still, his eyes down, he did not speak.

"Is—is that it?"

There is an angel of perversity who possesses our souls at times. He makes us say the unkind thing when we wish not to; he tangles our feet so that we fall and trip and hurt ourselves and our dearest—and behold long after we know that all the same it was an angel; that without that trouble we should have gone forever down the easy wrong way. We know that the perverse angel was sent to warn us off the pleasant grass which was none of ours, and by making things disagreeable at the psychological moment, save our souls alive for right things to come. Some such crosswise heavenly messenger gripped the mind of Alixe, and she said what she hated herself for saying, and saw the quick result in the downcast misery of poor François' face. And then the same cruel, wise angel turned his attention to François. "If she thinks that, let her," whispered the perverse one. "Let it go at that; say yes."

And François lifted mournful eyes and repeated, "That you should love Pietro—yes—that is what I have wished for all my life."

CHAPTER XXXV

SUMMONED

ON the morning of May ninth, 1840, the sun shone gaily in London. It filtered in intricate patterns through the curtains which shaded the upper windows of a house in Carlton Gardens, and the breeze lifted the lace, and sunlight and breeze together touched the bent head of a young man who sat at a writing-table. A lock of hair had escaped on his forehead and the air touched it, lifted it, as if to say "Behold the Napoleonic curl! See how he is like his uncle!"

But the pen ran busily, regardless of the garrulous breeze; there was much to do for a hard-working prince who found time to be the hero of ballrooms, the center of a London season, and yet could manipulate his agents throughout the garrisons of France, and plan and execute a revolution. It was the year when the body of Napoleon the First was brought from St. Helena to Paris, and Louis Bonaparte had resolved, in that steady mind which

never lost its grip on the reason of being of his existence, that with the ashes of the Emperor his family should come back to France. For months the network had been spread, was tightening, and now the memory which held its friendships securely always, took thought of a Frenchman living in Virginia. As soon as his letter was finished to his father—the pen flew across the lines:

"The sword of Austerlitz must not be in an enemy's hands," he wrote to his father. "It must stay where it may again be lifted in the day of danger for the glory of France." His letters were apt to be slightly oratorical; it was moreover the fashion of the day to write so.

He raised his head and stared into the street. It was enough to decide his expedition for this summer that General Bertrand, well-meaning, and ill-judging, had given to Louis Phillipe the arms of the Emperor, to be placed in the Invalides. Every member of the Bonaparte family was aroused, and to the heir it was a trumpet call. He could hardly wait to go to France, to reclaim that insulted sword. He wrote on, finished the letter to the exiled king, his father, a gloomy and lonely old man whom the son did not forget through years spent away from him.

Then he drew out a fresh sheet of paper, and his faint smile gleamed; for the thought of this adherent in Virginia was pleasant to him.

"Chevalier François Beaupré," he headed the letter, and began below, "My friend and Marshal of Some Day." He considered a moment and wrote quickly as if the words boiled to the pen. "The baton awaits you. Come. I make an expedition within three months, and I need you and your faith in me. Our stars must shine together to give full light. So, *mon ami,* join me here at the earliest, that the Emperor's words may come true.

"LOUIS BONAPARTE."

A knock at the door and a man entered, a man who seemed sure of his right in the room, who moved about the Prince as if he were a bit of personal belonging, an extra arm or leg ready to slip into place. The Prince looked up affectionately at the *valet de place* who had been his mother's servant, who recalled boyish days in Switzerland; who had managed escapes and disguises in the youthful exciting times of the Italian insurrection, the dangerous journey from Ancona; who even now, under Thélin, was getting together uniforms and equipments, was casting buttons of the fortieth regiment for the great event that was in the air.

"Fritz, here are letters to mail." He pushed them toward the man; then, as the last slipped from under his hand, he curved his fingers about it. "Be careful of this one, Fritz," he said. "It ought to bring me the brightness of my star."

Across the water, in Virginia, two years had made few changes. On the June day when the Prince's letter lay in the post-office of Norfolk the last of the roses were showering pink and red over the gardens in a sudden breeze. The leaves of the trees that arched the road that led to Roanoke House were sappy green, just lately fully spread and glorious with freshness. Their shadows, dancing on the white pike, were sharp cut against the brightness. And through the light-pierced cave of shade a man traveled on horseback from one plantation to another, a man who rode as a Virginian rides, yet with a military air for all that. He patted the beast's neck with a soothing word, and smiled as Aquarelle plunged at the waving of a bough, at a fox that ran across the road. But if an observer had been there he might have seen that the man's thought was not with horse or journey. François Beaupré, riding out to give a French lesson to Miss

ampton at Roanoke House, as he had been doing or four years, all unconscious as he was of the tter waiting for him at the moment in Norfolk, as thinking of the event to come to which that tter called him.

Down the velvet that swept from house to river t Roanoke House, by the brick wall which stretched n arm against the waters—a dark arm jeweled ith green of vines and white of marble statues—ere was a rustic summer-house. It was furnished ith chairs and a rustic table, and here, on this une day, the lady of the manor elected to study the rench language. The Chevalier Beaupré was taken ere on his arrival. Branches of trees whispered nd waved; afternoon shadows ran silently for-ward and silently withdrew across the lawn; the James River flowed by.

The two good friends bent together over the rough table, and the James River, slipping past, sang in a liquid undertone. And the time went fast in the pleasant lights and shadows of the place, and shortly it was two hours that the French lesson had been going on.

"Lucy! Oh, Lucy!" A voice called from the lawn, and in a moment more the colonel was upon them. "Lucy," he began, "somebody must arrange

about the new harnesses; my time is too valuable to be taken up with details. Uncle Zack says they are needed at once. It has been neglected. I do not understand why things are so neglected."

"I have seen to it, father. They will be ready in a week," Lucy answered.

Then the colonel noticed François. "Good day, Chevalier," he spoke condescendingly. "Ah—by the way"—he put a hand into one pocket and then another of his linen coat. "They gave me a letter for you, Chevalier, knowing that you would be at Roanoke House to-day. Here it is"—and Lucy saw a light leap into François' eyes as they fell on the English postmark. "About those harnesses, Lucy. Why did you not ask my permission before having them made? I do not understand how you can take so much on yourself."

And Lucy spoke quietly again. "I did ask you, father, but you did not see to it, and they were necessary. So I did it." And then, "Chevalier, read your letter. I see it is a foreign one."

"Will Mademoiselle pardon?"

At that moment an uneven step came down the slope and François flashed a smile at Harry Hampton and retreated to the other side of the summer-house with his letter; while the colonel, murmuring

complaints about harnesses, went strolling up the shadowy, bird-haunted lawn.

Harry Hampton stood by his sweetheart with a boyish air of proprietorship, radiant, as he had been through these two years of his engagement. "I have it," he announced. "Don't you want to see it?"

"Wait, Harry;" the girl glanced at François. But the lad caught her wrist. "Look," he said, and opened his free hand and a plain gold ring glittered from it. With a quick movement he slipped it over the little third finger. "There," he said, "that will be on to stay pretty soon, and then Uncle Henry shall not badger you about harnesses. He has made me wait two years because he needed you, but I won't wait much longer, will I, Lucy? Next Wednesday—that is the wedding-day, Lucy."

With that François turned around. His face shone with an excitement which could not escape even preoccupied lovers.

"What is it, Chevalier? You have news—what is it?" the girl cried.

For a moment he could not speak. Then: "Yes, Mademoiselle, great news," he said. "The Prince has sent for me. And I am well and fit to go. I have lived for this time; yet I am grieved to leave you and Harry, my two old friends."

"But, François, you can not go before Wednesday," Harry Hampton cried out. "We can not be married without you."

And François considered. "No, not before Wednesday," he agreed.

That last French lesson in the summer-house on the banks of the smooth-flowing James River was on a Saturday. On Monday the Chevalier Beaupré rode over from Carnifax and asked to see Miss Hampton.

"Mademoiselle Lucy," he said. "I have something to ask of you."

"I will do it," Lucy promised blithely, not waiting for details.

François laughed. "You trust one, Mademoiselle Lucy—that is plain." Then his face became serious. "Do you remember a talk we once had together when I told you of my old playmate, Alixe?"

The bride-to-be flushed furiously as she recalled that talk. Then she nodded in a matter-of-fact manner. "I remember very well," she said. "It was when I threw myself at your head and you said you didn't want me."

François' shoulders and hands and eyes went upward together into an eminently French gesture

What a horror!" he cried. "What an unspeakable anner to recollect that talk! How can you? How n you be so brutal to me?"

Both of them, at that, burst into light-hearted ughter. Lucy was grave suddenly.

"But you have something to ask me, François. ou spoke of your—playmate—beautiful Alixe."

"It is only you whom I could ask to do this, Madnoiselle Lucy. I have never told any one else bout her. Only you know of"—the words came owly—"of my love for her. She does not know . Alixe does not know. And I may be killed, one es, in this fight for the Prince. Quite easily. And lixe will not know. I do not like that. In fact can not bear it. So this is what I ask of you, dear Iademoiselle." He brought out a letter and held to her. "If you hear that I am killed, will you nd it to Alixe?"

Lucy took the letter and turned it over doubtully. "I do not like this sort of post-mortem comission, François. I feel as if I were holding your eath-warrant."

"But it is not by a bit of writing I shall meet my nish, Mademoiselle. I promise not to die one minte sooner for that letter. It is only that it will nake me happy to know you will send it."

So Lucy, holding the letter gingerly, agreed. B as François rose to go she stood by him a mom and laid her hand on his coat sleeve. "François want to tell you something."

"But yes, Mademoiselle—yes, Lucy."

"It is something wrong."

"Yes—Lucy."

"I am going to tell Harry I said it."

"Yes."

"This is it, then"—and François, smiling, wai and there was deep silence in the big, cool, q drawing-room for as long as a minute. "This it, then. I don't know how I can be so unreasona —but I am. I love Harry—I am happy. But I a quite—jealous of Alixe. And I think you are t most wonderful person I have ever known—m more wonderful than Harry. If there had been Alixe; if you had—liked me—I can imagine havi adored you. I *do* adore you, François. Now, h is all that compatible with my joy in marryi Harry? I don't know how it is—but it is so. am a wicked sinful person—but it is so."

François, bent over her two little hands, kiss them more than once, shook with laughter. "I c not guess the riddle," he said. "They say the he of a woman is an uncharted ocean. A man m

sail blindly over those waters and take the captain's word for it, even if one seems to be sailing two ways at once. For me, I am not very worldly-wise, but I am not such a fool as to stop believing in my friends because I can not understand them. You are yourself, little Lucy, and Harry and I both know better than to let anything you do alter our faith in that beautiful thing which you are—an American woman, Mademoiselle Lucy—you."

The next time Lucy Hampton saw François it was when, white-robed and sweet in her enveloping mist of veil she went up the chancel steps of the little Virginia country church, and looking up met a smile that was a benediction from the man whom she had loved, who stood close now at the side of her lover, her husband.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE PRINCE'S BRIGHT SHADOW

THERE are old people living in England to-day who remember hearing their fathers and mothers speak of a young Frenchman of uncommon personality, constantly seen with Prince Louis Napoleon during the last days of his life in London in the year 1840. Lady Constance Cecil nicknamed this Frenchman "the Prince's bright shadow." There seemed to be a closer tie than brotherhood between them, and the tradition runs that the mystical Prince had a superstition that his luck went with him in the person of the Chevalier Beaupré.

The days of that summer month were full days for the conspirators. On the surface, arranged to be seen of the world and to throw the world off its guard, was a steady round of gaiety; at one brilliant function after another the peasant François shared the honors and the lionizing of the Prince. Because his visionary eyes looked through things of tinsel to realities, the tinsel did not dazzle him. He gazed

.t the butterflies of the world who fluttered about ıim and saw people with kind hearts. And the ›utterflies themselves were seldom so tawdry but hat they responded to the simplicity and loving :indness which he held out to them. Few human elegraph stations fail utterly to take the message vhen the great universal wireless of reality sounds he note. So that François, not suspecting it, gained n a few weeks on many English hearts a hold vhose memory has not yet died away.

Beyond this evident social side of the London ife lay the hidden life of preparation for the event :o come—the attempt on Boulogne. And in this ›oth the Prince and his close follower and friend :eally breathed and had their being. There was :onstant excitement, constant labor, constant anxety. Once, toward the end of the time, François vas sent on a flying trip to France, to make ar-angements unsafe to trust to writing, for the Prince's affair. While on French soil he found time for a two-hours' visit to Vicques and saw his mother ınd Alixe and the general. Pietro, also, he saw, Pietro, who was to have joined the Prince in Lon-ıon by now, and who had instead incapacitated him-self for fighting for months to come. A village :hild had run suddenly out under his horse's feet,

and Pietro, saving the child, had thrown the horse and had been badly hurt. So he lay fretting his heart out silently at the castle, and when François stood by his bed, brilliant and tense as an arrow in its way, Pietro took his friend's hand in both his own and gripped it with all his force and then turned his face to the wall without a word. It was always François who was the hero.

So that the Prince's secretary sped back to England, sore in heart to miss the friend of his lifetime at his side in the good fight to come, yet too wholeheartedly ready for the work to be anything but an eager sword in the Prince's hand. The day for which he had longed all his life was at hand. The general had sent him off to it with a rough soldier's blessing; Alixe had kissed him sisterly; his mother had stood in the farm-house door, shielding with her hand those calm saint-like eyes, and he saw her lips move as he looked back and knew what she said as she watched him ride away to fight for Prince Louis. To fight for the Prince! Who could tell if ever he might ride back down that familiar road under the chestnuts?

But it was all as it should be; he was entirely happy. He had asked three wishes of the good fairies, as he had said long ago; that the Prince

should be Emperor—that he might become "a Marshal of France under another Bonaparte"—that Alixe should love him. The first two he believed about to be realized. The last? It was not now the time to think of that. Alixe had kissed him good-by. That would more than do till the fight was over. So he sped back to London, missing Pietro, but hopeful and buoyant. And in London there was a letter for him from Virginia.

"Dear François," Lucy began. "To think that the first letter sent to you by Harry's wife should be to tell you that she has betrayed your trust in her. I am distressed beyond words, for I have made a mistake which may mean distress to you. You remember the letter to Alixe which you trusted to me to send her in case anything should happen to you? I had it in my hand the week after my wedding when I had gone up-stairs to get other letters for Europe which my father had commanded me to send by the next packet. And in some stupid unexplainable way I slipped yours—your precious letter—among them in place of one to my father's agents in London, and I hurried down and gave the parcel to Sambo, who was waiting to ride to Norfolk with them. And then Harry and I went away on a visit to Martin's Brandon for three days, and it was only when I came back that I discovered the

dreadful mistake I had made. Can you ever forgive me? Harry and I thought over every possibility of stopping it, but there seemed to be no chance. Are you very angry with me, dear friend of Harry's and of mine?"

The letter went on with reproaches and regrets and finally slipped into a tale of a new happy life which François had made possible for the two. He read it over several times. His letter to Alixe which should have been sent only after his death had gone to her. What then? She would know that he loved her; that he had loved her always; that he would love her forever; that the one wish of his life had been that she should love himself—not Pietro. He had said that in the letter; that was all. He was glad that she should know, though he would never have told her in life. It was done and he would find out now if Pietro indeed cared for her, if she cared for Pietro. And if not, then one had waited long enough; then at last—the joy of the thought choked him. Through the years of renunciation that hope had not died. And now his letter had gone and the consequences must follow—after the fight. Everything must go till after the fight. Alixe had not had the letter before he saw her, this last time in Vicques; he was sure of that as he

thought back and remembered each word, each look of those short hours. But she would have it soon; in fact she had it now likely; his heart beat fast—she knew now that he loved her.

A knock came at the door of the room in the London lodging where he sat with Lucy Hampton's letter before him. Fritz Rickenbach stood there; his Highness would like to see the Chevalier. All personal thoughts were locked swiftly into the drawer with Lucy's letter and "the Prince's bright shadow" went to the Prince.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE THIRD WISH

ON the day when François in London read that letter of Lucy Hampton's which had awaited his return from France, a letter from Lucy Hampton reached Alixe at the château of Vicques. She carried it to Pietro's room where he sat in a deep chair at a window which looked over Delesmontes Valley and the racing Cheulte River, and the village strung on the shores. His elbow on the stone window-sill, his chin in his hand, he stared at the familiar picture.

Alixe, coming in without knocking at the open door, stepped across and stood by him, and he did not yet lift his head, his listless eyes did not yet shift their gaze from the broad landscape. Alixe, looking down at the black head with its short curls set in thick locks—after the manner of the curls of Praxiteles' Hermes—was startled to see many bright lines of gray through the dark mass. Was everybody getting old? François with the broad

ınd of white in his hair—and now Pietro—big ttle Pietro, who had come to them and learned to de Coq and played with them. Was Pietro get- ng old and gray?

By one of the sudden impulses characteristic of er, her hand flew out and rested on the curled head s if to protect it, motherly, from the whitening of me.

And Pietro turned slowly and looked up at her ʏith eyes full of hopelessness and adoration. Such look he had never before given her; such a look ıo one could mistake except a woman who would ıot let herself understand.

"It is good to be up and at the window, isn't it?" Alixe spoke cheerfully, and her hand left his head ınd she went on in a gay disengaged tone. "You vill be down-stairs in two or three days now, and hen it is only a jump to being out and about, and hen—then in a minute you will be well again."

"Oh, yes," Pietro answered without animation. 'It will not be long before I am well."

"Look, Pietro;" Alixe held out the paper in her ıand. "Such a queer letter! From Virginia. From he little Lucy Hampton of whom François talks. don't understand it. Will you let me read it to ʏou?"

"Surely," said Pietro, and waited with his m
smiling eyes on her face.

"My dear Mademoiselle," Alixe read. "I a
writing to beg your forgiveness, as I have begg
that of the Chevalier Beaupré, for the very gre
fault I have committed. The Chevalier trusted
me a letter for you which was to have been sent yo
only in case of a certain event; by a carelessne
which, unmeant as it was, I shall never forgive m
self, I gave it with other letters to our negro Sam
to be posted at once. By now it may have reach
you. I can not tell if I have made trouble or n
but in any case, I can not rest without saying to yo
—as well as to the Chevalier—how sorry I am. I
you can find it in your heart to forgive me, plea
do so, dear Mademoiselle. That I should ha
made trouble for one as dear to the Chevalier as yo
are is a deep grief to me. He has talked to me o
you. With a very earnest prayer again for yo
forgiveness I am, Mademoiselle, yours faithfull
and sincerely—LUCY HAMPTON HAMPTON."

Pietro looked bewildered. "What is it about?"
he asked.

"I wonder," and Alixe laughed and frowned a
the paper in her hand. "It seems François wro
me a letter and left it with little Mistress Hampto

o be sent 'in case of a certain event.' What event? What a strange thing for François to do! And hen he came to us here and said nothing of mys-erious letters left cooking in Virginia. I can not nake it out, Pietro—can you?"

"Not I," said Pietro.

"The letter of François has not come; that is cer-ain; I wonder if the negro Sambo lost it."

"Probably," Pietro said. "It should have come before this one, otherwise."

"It is a riddle," Alixe decided, "and I never guess them." Then, dropping into a seat on the wide window-sill, "Pietro—you are letting yourself be depressed."

The gray eyes met hers with something that seemed a wall of reserve in their steady glance. "I think possibly I miss having no exercise," he said. "I will feel more natural when I can get about."

Alixe looked at him. "You are eating your heart out to be with François," she said, and laid her hand on his.

Pietro started as if the light touch had shaken him; then slowly his large fingers twisted lightly around the small ones, and he turned his face again, holding her hand so, to the window and the view of the valley and the river and the village. A moment

they sat so, the girl's hand loose in the hollow of the man's; a slow red crept into Alixe's face; there was confusion in her brain. She had laid her hand in that of her brother; her brother had taken it in his —and behold, by a witchcraft it was all changed. This delicate big grasp that held her was not brotherly; through all her veins suddenly she knew that the flush shot up to her eyes, to her forehead, and she tried, with an attempt at an every-day manner, to draw her hand away. But Pietro, his set pale face toward the window, his eyes gazing out, held her hand. With that the world had reeled and was whirling past her. Pietro had caught both her hands in a tight grip and had drawn them against him, was holding them there, was looking at her with a face which not even she, this time, might mistake.

"Alixe," he said, "I know you don't care for me. I know you love François. I did not mean ever to speak, but when you put your hand on mine—"

He held her palms together and parted the palms and kissed the finger-tips, first of one and then of the other, as if he kissed something holy.

"I shall never speak again, but this once I will. I always loved you—one must. I knew always that a slow silent person like me would have no chance

gainst a fellow like François. So I have kept still, nd it was hard. It won't be so hard now that you now. Are you angry, Alixe?"

Alixe, with her head bent so that Pietro did not ee her face, with her head bending lower—lower, uddenly was on her knees by the chair and her face as on Pietro's arm.

"Alixe," he whispered, "what is it—what have I done?"

But the brown waves of hair with the blue ribbon tied around them lay motionless on his arm. And suddenly a thought shook him.

"It can not be!" he gasped.

And Alixe lifted her face, and the exaggerated black lashes lifted, and the blue glance lifted and rested on Pietro's black hair bent down where the light shone on the silver lines through it. Up flashed her hand impulsively, gently—as Alixe did things, and touched the thick lock with an infinitely delicate caress. "Your hair—is all turning gray," she whispered in two quick breaths, and at that, in some occult fashion Pietro knew.

It makes little difference of what wood the match is made which sets fire to the mine; it makes little difference what words are spoken when that tale is telling. Anything says it. At a certain moment a

man might remark that grass was green, and a woman might answer that it appeared pink to her—and it would be love-making. The voice and the look and the very atmosphere about would do the work; words are a detail. So does the soul out-fly its slow vehicle of speech when the rushing mighty wind of such a feeling lifts and speeds it. Pietro knew; for all his self-distrust he drew her into his arms and held her without one shadow of doubt that she loved him and belonged to him.

For moments they had no need of that makeshift language; the great house was very quiet, and one heard the horses stamping in the paved courtyard and the grooms singing, and yet one did not hear it. Distant sounds came from the village, but one only knew that long after, in remembering that morning. All they knew was that the ghost of a lifelong affection of brother and sister stood before them changed by a miracle to a shining angel into whose face, for these first moments, they dared not look. Then slowly, exquisitely, courage came and, hand close in hand, they looked at each other astonished, glad. It was Pietro and Alixe still, the ancient playfellows, the childhood friends—all the dear familiarity was there yet, but no longer were they brother

nd sister. And then, after a while they began to ompare notes of things hidden.

"When did you begin—to like me—this way, 'ietro?"

"I don't know," answered Pietro stupidly. "Does : make any difference?"

"A great deal," Alixe insisted. "It's important. t's historical."

"But this isn't history," said Pietro.

Alixe, however, returned to the charge. "Last 'ear?"

"Last year—what?" Pietro asked; he had already forgotten the question. "Oh—that I began to—*Mon Dieu*—no. Last year! Why, I think it was :he day I came and saw you riding Coq."

"Oh, Pietro—if you will talk only nonsense!" Alixe's voice was disappointed. "But why, then, lidn't you ever say so before this? We are both ı thousand years old now. If you—loved me"—ihe spoke the word in a lower voice—"why, then, were you as quiet as a mouse about it all these 'ears?"

"I thought you cared for François," Pietro said iimply. And added, "Didn't you?"

Alixe considered. "I don't—think—I ever did,

Pietro. Not really. I thought I did perhaps. I dazzled me—François—with his way of doing sorts of things brilliantly, and that wonderful some thing about him which makes everybody love him He believed in his star; there was around him a romance of the Emperor's prophecy and the romance of the career which is, we believe, about to begin now; there was always a glamour about François.

"Yes," Pietro agreed. "The glamour of his own age, Alixe, of loyalty and unselfishness; the qualities which make what people call his charm. François is unlike the rest of the world, I believe, Alixe."

Pietro stopped, then went on with an unaccustomed eloquence.

"Whatever may be the fibers from which souls are woven, those of François were so adjusted from his birth that things hard to most of us are easy to him. It has never been an effort for François to love mankind and to believe the best of every one. Also, things unreal to most are his realities. He lives very close to that line over which is inspiration or madness—men call it either, according as it succeeds or fails in this world. There are questions yet to be understood, I believe, which will account for François' trick of vision-seeing. Perhaps a hundred years from now, perhaps five hundred

people will know things about the human mind which may make clear that strange gift of his. It may be that there are powers of the mind not now understood. There may be a world of mental possibility beneath consciousness."

Pietro talked on, the silent Pietro, as if delivering a lecture. He had read much and thought much; it was seldom he spoke of the speculations which often filled his scholarly mind; to-day it seemed easy to talk of everything. Joy had set wide all the doors of his being. Alixe opened her eyes in astonishment.

"Pietro! You are—talking like a book! But it is true; something of that sort has come to me, too —which proves it to be true. I have felt always that François had notes in him which are not on our pianos." Pietro smiled, looking at her.

"And yet, Alixe, you do not love François, with all these gifts and all his power over hearts—but only commonplace me?"

Alixe straightened against his arm. "Monsieur the Marquis Zappi, the gentleman I—care for, is not commonplace. I thank you not to say it," she shot at him, and then, melting to a sudden intensity, she put a hand on each side of his dark face and spoke earnestly. "Pietro, dear, listen. I believe

I always cared for you. When I was little it
me to have François forever the one to do the
ing things. Do you remember how I used to
at you because you would not fight him?" Pie
smiled again. "Then he was captain of the
and you only a private, and I cried about that
I was alone at night. And when you went
Italy so quietly, with never a word said about
danger, I did not know that you were doing
deed—I thought it a commonplace that you
go back to your country, till François opened
eyes."

"François?" Pietro asked.

"Yes. The day before he went to join you
were riding together and he told me what it
to be a patriot in Italy under the Austrians.
day I realized how unbearable it would be if
thing happened to you. But I thought I cared
François; if he had spoken that day I should
told him that I cared for him. But he did not;
went—and was in prison five years."

"And all that time I believed you loved him,
were mourning for him," Pietro said gently.

"I half believed it too," Alixe answered. "
all the time I was jealous for you, Pietro, for
was still François who was the hero—not

Then when there came a question of his rescue I was mad with the desire to have you do it—and you did it."

"It was still François who was the hero," Pietro said. "Only the commonplace things fell to me, as is fitting."

"No," Alixe cried. "I know better now. Was it commonplace the other day when you saved little Antoinette Tremblay and lamed yourself for—months, maybe? That was enough for a lifetime, Pietro. And you have never failed any one—not once. As François said, you are 'a heart of gold, a wall of rock'."

Her voice dropped. She laid her hand against his shoulder and spoke, in a quick cautious way.

"But all that is immaterial. I just love you—that's the point." A moment later she spoke again. "I want to finish telling you—and then we need never speak of it again. I did think you were—commonplace. And yet I knew in my heart you were not, for I resented your seeming so. So I urged you into danger. I wanted you to be a hero. I had that echo of a schoolgirl's romance about François in my mind, and I clung, all along, to the idea that I loved him and that perhaps he secretly loved me but would not say it because he was poor and a

peasant; that he was waiting till his future was made. Then, one day, only the other day, he told me that he had asked three wishes of life—'of the good fairies' he said. One was to make Prince Louis Emperor, one was to be Marshal of France the third—" she stopped.

"What?" Pietro demanded, his mouth a bit rigid.

Alixe flushed and smiled and took Pietro's big hand and covered her eyes with it. "That I should—love you, Monsieur. He said he had wished that all his life."

"May heaven grant him his wish," said Pietro fervently, and then, reflecting, "It seems a strange wish for François. You are sure, Alixe?"

"Yes, he said so," Alixe insisted. "Our dear François," she went on softly, and the blue intensity of her eyes grew misty. "Dear François," she repeated, "it is only he who could have had those three wishes. The single one that was for himself was not because he cared for it himself, but because it was the Emperor's prophecy."

"I always thought," Pietro spoke slowly, "that it was not indeed for himself that he wished to be a Marshal some day, but because it might make him, in a manner, your equal. It was for you."

"For me!" Alixe was astonished. "I never

thought of that. I think you thought of it, Pietro, only because you—cared for me—and thought François must care also."

"Yes, I thought he cared," Pietro considered. "I can not believe otherwise yet."

"You may believe it." Alixe was firm. "For he said that what he had wished always was that I should—love you. I did it mostly to please François," she added serenely.

And Pietro's response to that was apt, but not to be given here. The minds of these two happy lovers were full of that third who had been so close always, to each of them.

"Pietro," Alixe spoke earnestly, coming back to the same subject, "you know that I love François—of course. But you do not know in what way. I love him as if he were one of the saints—but also as if he were a helpless little child. Yet not—Pietro—as if he were—the man I love. I would give my life for him in a rush of delight, if he needed it. But I know now, whatever were my vague dreams in past years, that it is not in François to care for a woman as a human man. Somehow, among all his wonderful qualities that one thing was left out. He never could have cared for me so that—the touch of my hand counted, or—or so that all other

women should seem—different. I think, indeed, that if some dear girl should have loved him he might easily have married her out of pure friendship and gentleness, not knowing what the real love of a man to a woman is like. That is impossible to him."

"I am not so sure," said Pietro, and shook his head.

"You know I am not abusing our François," Alixe protested. "Why, Pietro, my father believes, and I believe, that if affairs should so happen that he has his opportunity he may yet be one of the great characters in history. My father says he is made up of inspirations, illuminations—and limitations."

"Yes," said Pietro thoughtfully. "He has the faults of brilliancy and fearlessness. He judges too rapidly. If he were afraid ever—if he saw the other side of a question ever, his judgment would be safer. It may well happen that he will be one of the great men of Europe; it may also happen that by some single act of mismanagement he will throw away his career—or his life. God keep him safe!" Pietro said simply.

And Alixe echoed it—"God keep him safe!" And then, "I am going to write him, Pietro—about us. My father knows where to reach him at Boulogne.

I am going to say just a word—that what he has wished for all his life is true. It will get to him the night before the battle."

"Are you sure you are right, Alixe?" Pietro asked doubtfully.

"Sure," said Alixe buoyantly.

"Give him my love, then," said Pietro.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE NIGHT BEFORE

OUT in the dark, in the harbor of Boulogne, the ship *Edinburgh Castle* lay rocking in the wind. Prince Louis Bonaparte, who had chartered her, and the handful of his followers who had sailed with him on her from England had disembarked quietly at twilight, and in small companies had succeeded in entering the town and the quarters of the officers who were, in France, the nucleus and the hope of their attempt. In the rooms of Lieutenant Aladenize, the host of the Prince, a short council had been held to go over once more the plans which had been discussed and settled by letter for weeks already. The work was carefully arranged; there was almost nothing to be changed, and the little company of men who were trying so large a fate scattered, with grave faces, with quiet good nights to the Prince who might to-morrow night be their Emperor, to the Prince for whose sake they might to-morrow night be any or all ruined men or dead men.

Charles Thélin, his valet of many years, unpacked
s Highness' belongings busily in Lieutenant Alad-
ize's bedroom; the Prince heard—subconsciously
tentive to small things—as the servant moved
out, yet he stood lost in his thoughts, as the last of-
er left him. One hand lay on a table littered with
pers of the expedition; the gray dull eyes were
:ed yet on the door that had shut out his friends.
here was no hint of wavering in the poised mind;
ere was no shadow of doubt of his destiny, yet
e man was very human, and to-night great lone-
ıess seized him. These good fellows who were
ıking their lives and their fortunes for him were
:voted to him without doubt, yet what did it
nount to? That they hoped for advancement
rough him, it would be absurd to resent; one and
l they believed that he would be Emperor; they
ıew that he would be grateful; their fortunes were
ade if to-morrow should succeed. They had much
iendliness for him—he realized that under his
ıther's taciturn manner he had his mother's gift
ſ winning hearts and that his followers loved him
-in a way. But what did it amount to—love of
ollowers for a Prince? He longed to-night for
ɔmething more personal, and suddenly, with a
ang, he knew what he wanted—like the homesick

lad who had cried himself to sleep at the Tuiller twenty-five years before, he wanted his mother.

The tie between Hortense and this youngest a dearest son had been close, and this was the great event of his eventful life in which her c mind and daring spirit had not played its part. B fore his attempt on Strasburg, now three years a he had prepared two letters, one in case of succ one of failure, to be sent off post-haste to the Qu ill at Arenenberg; to-night there was no one to w to, no one to whom his success or failure mea more than to himself. All that warmth and eag hopefulness which had outlasted danger and ex and illness and age, had gone from earth, and t body of Hortense lay in the little church of Re near Malmaison. The Emperor-to-be dropped i a chair, his head fell and his outstretched ar rustled amid the plans of fortifications, and t writing under his cheek was wet. The weakn was only for a moment, and quietly, as he did ever thing, the Prince pulled himself together. He s erect and listened. Thélin was brushing clot with energy in the bedroom, and through anoth door there came a light sound of a paper turned, a a gay song sung softly. And a glow sudden warmed the Prince's heart; here was some one w

d known his mother, who had been, indeed, for a w days her son; here was some one who cared for m, he believed it, with a half-consuming flame of votion. Since the man's arrival from Virginia c weeks before, to have him near himself had been pleasure to Louis Bonaparte; he seemed to bring ck the freshness of his early days, of the young nfidence when his star shone for him, distant per- ps, but undimmed by the black clouds which ove now across it. He was a bit superstitious out François as well, with an idea, which he spoke no one, that a pivotal interest of his career rested the modest figure.

"Have a care of that young man, my Prince," ad said General Montholon, the old soldier. "Do ot trust him too far."

The Prince's faint smile gleamed. "I would trust ie empire to his loyal heart, General."

"But yes," answered the general swiftly, "to his eart, but not to his head. He is of the dreamers— visionary. He might ruin many months' work ith one good intention." And the Prince reflected, ut did not agree.

He rose, this night in Boulogne, as the paper rus- led and the little French provincial chanson ounded from the room where François Beaupré,

now his secretary, had been installed, and stopp
to the closed door.

"De tous côté's l'on que je suis bête."

François sang softly. The Prince smiled. H
knew the song and its place in François' histo
As he opened the door the singing stopped; t
young man sprang respectfully to his feet, a le
grasped in his hand, and stood waiting.

"Sire!" he said.

Prince Louis flung out his hand with a gesture o
impulsiveness strange to his controlled manner, y
not out of drawing to those who knew him we
"Ah, François," he cried. "Let the titles go for to
night. Say, 'Louis', as on that day when we fi
saw each other; when the four children played t
gether in the old château ruins. I have a great d
sire to hear some one who loves me speak my nam
simply as friend to friend. With all those good fe
lows"—and he tossed a wave of the hand to th
door by which the conspirators had left him—"wi
my officers, it is necessary to keep up formality—
realize it. But you, my inspired peasant, are differ
ent. You stand in no class; you would guard m
dignity more quickly than I, myself. I can trust
to you. The memory of my mother's voice calling
me 'Louis' is in your heart; call me so, then, to

ght, my friend, as if we were indeed the brothers e once had to be for five days." And François niled his radiant exquisite smile and answered ıietly. "But yes, my brother—Louis." And went ı, "I believe I shall not sleep to-night, Louis. I elieve I am too happy to sleep."

As one reads a novel for relaxation in the strain f a critical business affair, Prince Louis caught at ıe distraction of this side issue. The next morning ras planned to the last detail; there was nothing to o till daylight, yet he could not sleep at present. Iere was a romance of some sort. He sank back ın the cushions of the couch of Lieutenant Aladenze's smoking room and put his feet up luxuriously, nd slowly lighted a cigar of Havana.

"Tell me," he ordered, and the gentleness of apeal was in the order.

"Sire"—the young man began—and corrected ıimself. "Louis," he said. The Prince smiled limly. "Since our landing I have known that a vonderful thing has happened to me. It is"—he poke lower—"it is the love of the woman who is o me the only one in the world."

Prince Louis, extended on the couch smoking, a picture of expressionless inattention, missing not ın inflection, cast his mind back rapidly many years.

There, a vague memory now, he found a picture of a spirited, white-clad, little girl framed in the ruins of the old castle; of a boy stepping to her side to champion her sudden embarrassment. The heavy-lidded eyes turned a kindly glance on the erect figure in its new uniform of an officer of the fortieth.

"I congratulate you, *mon ami,*" he said gently. "Is it by any chance the delightful little Mademoiselle Alixe of the old château?"

Beaupré turned scarlet. He was a marvelous man, this Prince Louis. How had he guessed? "She loves me—I have here a letter in which she tells me that she loves me. Will his Highness read it?" With an impetuous step forward he held the paper toward Louis Napoleon.

"I thank you," the Prince said gravely. He read:

"François, what you have wished all your life is true. The good fairies have granted one of your wishes before the battle. That they will give you the other two on the day of the battle is the belief of your ALIXE."

And below was written hurriedly, "Pietro sends his love."

The Prince gave back the letter with a respectful

and; then looked at François inquiringly. "'What ou have wished all your life,' *mon ami?*" Fran- ois laughed happily. "One must explain, if it will ot tire his Highness." And he told, in a few ords, of that day when his self-restraint had given ay and how, when his guard was down and he was n the point of telling his lifelong secret love, some pirit of perversity—but François did not know it as an angel—had caught Alixe, and she had ac- used him of wishing always that she might love ietro. And how, meshed in that same net of hurt ecklessness, he had answered in her own manner— Yes," he had said, "it was that which had been the vish of his life—that Alixe might love Pietro!" And François laughed gaily, telling the simple en- anglement to the Prince, the night before the bat- le. "One sees how she is quick and clear-sighted, ny Alixe," he said. "For she knew well even then t was not that I wished." He stopped, for in the uiet contained look of the listener an intangible omething struck a chill to his delicately-poised sen- itiveness. "What is it, Louis?" he cried out. "You lo not think I mistake her—mistake—Alixe!"

Prince Louis saw the dawning of consternation. Rapidly he considered. Was it well to take away a nan's happiness and courage just before a fight?

He remembered some words of François spok three years before, words whose dramatic bare had struck him. "When a knight of the old t went into battle," the young man had said, "he w on his helmet the badge of his lady, and the thou of her in his heart. A man fights better so." V well. This blind knight should have his letter, w the meaning he had read into it, for his lady's bad and he should fight to-morrow with the though her in his heart. The letter suggested another mea ing to sophisticated Louis Bonaparte, but there is need to hasten the feet of unhappiness. The re nant French voice spoke at last in an unused acce of cordiality and the Prince lied, with ungrudgi graciousness.

"Mistaken, my François! Not at all. The lit billet-doux breathes love for you in each line—the is no question! But, *mon ami*, you have not fi ished your story." So François explained ab the letter left with Lucy Hampton and its prem ture sending. "That has reached her now—sh knows now that I love her, she knows what h really been my lifelong wish—she has hurried this and his hand crushed his note tenderly—"she h hurried this to me before the fight—that I mig know her love also—that I might fight better i

u, my Prince—Louis—with that joy in my art." Prince Louis, his head thrown back, his expressionless eyes watching the rings of smoke which puffed from his mouth—ring after ring, mounting in dream-like procession to the low ceiling, conlered again. Somewhere in the chain of events this love-affair his keen practical sense felt a link at did not fit—a link forced into connection. aguely he discerned how it was—something had ıppened to the Virginian letter—there had been a ɔnfusion somewhere. To him the four words of .lixe's postscript were final. "Pietro sends his ıve." A subconscious reasoning made him certain ıat Pietro would not have come into such a letter it had been indeed a love-letter; that the three nes of writing just before the battle could not have eld another man's name, if they had been written ɔ the man whom she loved. Very dimly, very urely the Prince concluded these things; and then e lowered his cigar, and his gray dull eyes came own from the ceiling and rested, kindly, on the adiant face. "You are right, my friend. It was an xquisite thought of your lady-love to put this other veapon, this bright sword of happiness into your ıand, to fight with to-morrow. *Mon Dieu,* we will eward her by sending her back a Marshal's baton

by you; a Marshal's baton to-morrow, François How would it sound, *par exemple*, to say 'Madame la Maréchâle'?"

The light from François' eyes was like a lamp

"My Prince—Sire—there are three things I have desired all my life, all great things, but of them the one—the baton of a Marshal—is the least. If I might win her love—I have said; if I might help put you in Napoleon's place and shout *'Vive l'Empereur'* for you on the throne of France; if I might fulfil the Emperor's prophecy and be not a 'Marshal some day' any longer but a Marshal of your empire—it is asking much of one lifetime above all for a man born a peasant, is it not? Yet of those three wishes one wonderful fulfilment has come to me"—he gripped his letter closer—"and one, I believe to-morrow brings. Before to-morrow night"—his great eyes were lifted toward the ceiling of the room, and in them was the rapt look of the child of the farm-house in the Jura, a look as of a seer of visions, a look that caught at the Prince's nerves, and made him draw a breath quickly. "Something above myself tells me," François said slowly, and the words came with a languid power as if his personality were a medium, "that before to-morrow night the officers who stand about you

ıall hail you Emperor over the body of a man who es before you."

In the silence, the Prince's watch could be heard cking. François shivered violently.

"Ugh!" he said, his teeth chattering. "It gives ıe a *crise de nerfs'*, that trick of vision-seeing. I o not like it, and yet at times it seizes me. Why hould it come to a man happy as I am—a man who ıas dared ask three enormous wishes of the good airies; who holds one of them in his hand"—he ifted the letter—"who sees another in easy reach, ınd who," he smiled brilliantly, "who will be well ontent without the third, my Prince, the first two being his." He shivered again. "Is the night raw? It is as if I were in a grave, this coldness," he said, looking about with a disturbed gaze, "yet my life is just beginning."

The Prince rose and tossed his cigar to the fireplace. "It is simply that you are tired, François," he said in the tranquil tones which no peril disturbed. "The nerves of us all are stretched and yours are the finest strung. Go to bed, and at daylight you will be warm enough, with the work that awaits us. Sleep well—good night, my friend."

Later, in the darkness of his chamber, Prince Louis lay awake, his imagination filled with the man

whose dramatic personality appealed to him as few had ever done. He thought of his own life, according to his lights not a bad life, radically strong and radically gentle, yet complicated, abnormal from its start, with many shadows and many stains; then of the crystal clearness of this other's, with his three wishes in which he trusted as simply as a child would trust to the fairies. A smile almost tender stole across the mask-like features in the dark. "There is no doubt but the girl will marry the marquis," he reflected. "Yet I am glad I left him his hope and his happiness." A vision of François' beatified look rose before him.

"A man fights better so," the Prince murmured aloud, and, his own sadness forgotten in another man's joy, he fell asleep.

CHAPTTR XXXIX

THE BUGLE-CALL

THE gray dawn of a Sunday morning began to break over the sleeping city of Boulogne, yet earlier than the dawn anxious eyes opened to watch, and men's hearts beat fast to meet it. Scattered in lodging-houses and barracks Louis Napoleon's followers were waiting before daylight for the part they had to play. No man among them was as quiet, as little nervous as the Prince, yet his as well as every gallant heart of them felt a throb of relief with its bound of excitement when a trumpet from the Austerlitz barracks, the barracks of the fourth artillery, Napoleon's own regiment, suddenly sounded.

It was the signal, and in a moment the Prince and his escort were moving down the dark street toward Colonel Vaudrey's quarters, toward that ringing note not yet died out from the pulsing air. One could see a little bustle through the drowsy place—a head out of a window here and there, blinking

puzzled eyes to see what the unusual summons, the early trumpet note might mean. But a handful of men in uniform was no sensation in the garrison town and the good citizens went back to their morning naps.

The city was tranquil when Prince Louis reached the barrack-gate, and the soldier-blood in him rushed in a tide when he saw sixty mounted artillerymen posted at the entrance, and beyond, in the yard, statue-like, warlike, silent, the regiment formed in square. If the fourth artillery followed its colonel, if the day went well, this was the core of his army. Colonel Vaudrey was in the center of the square; the Prince marched quietly to him and as he came, with a sharp simultaneous clatter that was the music of Heaven to his ears, the whole regiment presented arms.

In the glowing light the soldiers who fronted toward him could see that the colorless face turned grayer, but that was all, and quickly Colonel Vaudrey spoke to his men.

"Soldiers of the fourth artillery," he said loudly, "a revolution begins to-day under the nephew of the Emperor Napoleon. He is before you, and comes to lead you. He has returned to his land to give back the people their rights, the army

s greatness. He trusts in your courage, your de-
ɔtion to accomplish this glorious mission. My sol-
iers, your colonel has answered for you. Shout
ıen with me 'Long live Napoleon! Long live the
:mperor.'"

The terse soldierly words were hardly finished
vhen the regiment, strongly Bonapartist always,
arried off its feet now by the sight of the Prince,
ɔy the honor of being the first to whom he came,
aught up the cry, and the deep voices sent it roll-
ng down the empty streets. Louis Bonaparte
ıtanding erect, motionless, impassive as always,
wondered if a pulse might beat harder than this
ınd not break. He held up his hand, and rapidly,
yet with lingering shouts of enthusiasm, the tu-
mult quieted. The regiment to its farthest man
heard every word of the strong tones.

"Soldiers," he said, "I have come to you first
because between you and me there are great mem-
ories. With you the Emperor, my uncle, served as
captain; with you he won glory at the siege of Tou-
lon; you opened the gates of Grenoble to him when
he came back from Elba. Soldiers, the honor of be-
ginning a new empire shall be yours; yours shall be
the honor of saluting first the eagle of Austerlitz
and Wagram." He caught the standard from an

officer and held it high. "It is the sign of French glory; it has shone over every battle-field; it has passed through every capitol of Europe. Soldiers, rally to the eagle! I trust it to you—we will march to-day against the oppressors, crying 'Long live France'."

One who has not heard a regiment gone mad can not know how it was. With deafening clatter and roar every sword was drawn and the shakos flew aloft and again and again and again the men's deep voices sent up in broken magnificent chorus the great historic cry to which armies had gone into battle.

"Vive l'Empereur! Vive Napoleon!"

The souls of a thousand men were on fire with memories and traditions, with a passion of consecration to a cause, and as if the spell of the name grew stronger with its repetition they shouted over and over, in tremendous unison, over and over and over.

"Vive Napoleon! Vive l'Empereur!"

It was necessary at last for the quiet slender young man who was the storm-center to raise his hand again, and with a word, with the glimmer of a smile to speak his gratitude—to stop the storm. There was much to be done. The fourth artillery

ıs but one of several regiments to be gained if the :tory were to be complete. Colonel Lombard was spatched to a printing office with proclamations be struck off; Lieutenant Laity hurried away to s battalion; a detachment was sent to hold the legraph office; the tumult once quieted, the yard as a scene of efficient business, for all this had :en planned and each officer knew his work. In a :ry few moments the officers of the third artil- ry who were with the Prince had hastened to their ıarters, another had been sent to arouse the forty- xth of the line, at the Place d' Alton barracks, and ıortly Prince Louis himself was on his way to the ame place. Through the streets of the city, no ɔnger empty, he passed with his officers, and the eople poured from their houses, and joined and nswered the shouts of the soldiers.

"Vive l'Empereur!" the soldiers cried. "It is the ıephew of Napoleon," and the citizens threw back, *'Vive l'Empereur!* It is the son of the honest ɛing of Holland! It is the grandson of Josephine!"

They pressed so close about the small figure in its Swiss uniform of a colonel that for a moment he was separated from his officers, and Colonel Vaudrey, smiling for all his military discipline, was forced to order his mounted artillerymen to clear

the road. Every moment an old soldier broke out of the mass and embraced the eagle which Lieutenant de Querelles carried proudly high above all this emotion; the soldiers' eyes flashed with success; the Prince's heart beat high for joy to know that he had not misread the heart of army or people. When the column passed the *gendarmerie* the guard turned out and presented arms, shouting "Long live the Emperor!" So he went through the streets of Boulogne, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte eight long years before he came to his own, and marched in triumph and acclamation to a failure.

And close by his side, his look as radiant as the Prince's look was contained and impassive, marched always François Beaupré. The hard-earned military knowledge, the patient toil of preparation had come into play, and in a hundred ways the man had been useful. With no exact rank as yet, but ready at any moment, eager for the hardest task, never asking for rest, quick-witted, resourceful, officers as well as Prince had developed a habit of turning to Beaupré for service after service. And always they were met with a glad consent which encouraged them to ask more until the Prince had said:

"It is the case of the willing horse; I will not per-

that my right-hand man be worked to death—it st stop."

To-day, however, François had a definite duty of ponsibility. While the Prince marched, gather- strength at every yard, through the town toward Place d' Alton at its farther side, Colonel uard of the third artillery had gone to pro- im the great news to his regiment and to hold em ready. In case of success at the Place d' Al- n, Beaupré was to go back and bring them to in the Prince. In case of failure they were to be s reserve. The Place d' Alton barracks lay be- veen town and ramparts, to be reached from the wn side only by a narrow lane; but the ramparts ommanded with a large open space the yard where ie soldiers assembled. If the Prince entered from ie town side, from the street—Faubourg Pierre— nly an escort could go with him. If he went by he ramparts the whole enthusiastic fourth artil- ery might be at his back. This then was the route hosen.

But as the Prince and the regiment and the swing- ng shouting mass of citizens made its way toward he quarters, suddenly, too late, the officers about his Highness saw that some one had blundered.

Somewhere in the van a man had lost his head, h
forgotten, and the compact inelastic procession h
been led toward the approach from the Faubou
Pierre, the narrow lane at the side toward the ci
It was a serious mistake, yet not of necessity fa
and at all events they must make the best of it. T
Prince could not make a dramatic entrance at t
head of a shouting regiment, but for all that
might win the forty-sixth.

He did win the forty-sixth. Something had ha
pened to the officer sent to arouse them—anoth
slip in the chain—and instead of being drawn u
in the yard they were getting ready for Sunday i
spection, but they flocked to the windows at t
noise, they rushed into the yard at the name
Napoleon. An old sergeant of the Imperial Gu
ran forward and kissed Prince Louis' hand, and t
reserved face lightened—he knew the value of a li
of sentiment with Frenchmen; he was not wro
in a moment the line regiment had caught up t
cries of *"Vive l'Empereur!"* raised by the artiller
men, and the earlier scene of the Austerlitz ba
racks was being repeated here. Prince Louis, pa
and composed in the center of the roar of voic
the seething sea of excitement, heard a word at h
ear and turned.

"Sire, it is success. I go to bring up your Masty's other regiment," François said, and the rince answered quietly:

"Yes, it is success. Go, *mon ami.*"

In a moment the messenger had thrown himself ı the horse of an artilleryman and forced a way ırough the recoiling mass, down the lane, and out › the Faubourg Pierre. In the free street he gal›ped the horse, through the windings that he had :arned with this moment in his mind. The third ras drawn up waiting, and a shout like a clap f thunder greeted his news. Buoyant, proud, he ook his place by the colonel at their head, and gaily he joyful march back began. The sun had come rom behind the clouds of early morning and shone ;loriously on glancing steel, on the brilliant swingng line of the regiment. Low branches of trees ›rushed François' shoulder as he rode and the touch :hrilled him, for he knew by it that this was true ınd not a dream, and he, François Beaupré, was leading a regiment of France to France's Emperor. The glory, the joy of his happy life, culminated in those bright moments.

Suddenly a man galloped from a side street, in front of the advancing troops; he stopped, saluted, called a word. It was not a day to take anything

for granted; Colonel Couard halted the regiment.

"The arsenal," the man gasped. "They have taken Monsieur de Persigny prisoner. Monsieur le General Voirol is on his way, but he is distant. It is a step from here. The third artillery could arrive there before him—they would surrender—Monsieur de Persigny would be released"—he stopped breathless.

The colonel turned an inquiring look on François. As the Prince's messenger, as the man whom he had seen closest to the Prince's person, he deferred to him, and François realized that he must make, and make quickly, a momentous decision. The arsenal was immense and lightly guarded. If Persigny had been sent with a small force to take it, for the ammunition it held might at any moment be of supreme importance. It seemed that the detachment which guarded it had been underrated, for it had made prisoners of De Persigny and his men and this aide-de-camp had alone escaped. If they were to be rescued, if the arsenal was to be gained for the Prince, this very moment must be seized. General Voirol, royalist, the commandant at Boulogne, was on his way with reinforcements and the third might well hold the arsenal against him but not gain it from him. With his whole being con-

:ntrated François thought. The orders were plain —to lead the third artillery to join the Prince on ıe ramparts. But there are times in history when ɔ obey orders is treachery. Was not this moment, eavy with the right or wrong of his decision, one f them? Was it not the part of a mind capable of reatness to know and grasp the flying second of pportunity? Would not the Prince reproach him, f he stupidly let this one chance in a thousand go y, for servile fear of disobeying orders? He had eft his Highness safe with two regiments at his back; this other could do nothing at the Place d'Alton barracks but swell the ranks; here, by a turn of a hand, they might win for the cause the very blood and bones of success, a mighty arsenal, and for themselves honor and gratitude from their Emperor. In François' mind was a touch of innocent vanity that he should have the power to render so signal a service, yet no thought at all for himself or for the honor he might gain or lose; whole-heartedly he weighed the reasons why or why not it would be best for the Prince.

The aide-de-camp's voice broke in. "My Colonel, I beg you, I implore you, save Monsieur de Persigny. The Prince loves him—he will be very angry if he is left helpless—they threaten to execute him

—I myself heard—I implore you, Mons Colonel. For the rest, it is indeed the mom fate to win the arsenal."

François' face lit with a fire of decision Colonel, it is for the Prince—it would be his we must not let slip the gift of destiny. T arsenal!"

And while orders rang out sharply and the reg ment wheeled into sliding lines that doubled an parted and flowed together again in an elast stream toward the looming arsenal, François, wi a quick word to De Persigny's aide-de-camp, wa writing rapidly on a bit of paper.

"You will take this to the Prince at once," he ordered, and the young officer saluted, for he, too knew, as most of them did, this man's anomalous yet strong hold on Prince Louis.

François rode again to the colonel's side, and he did not doubt that he had decided rightly.

CHAPTER XL

THE ACCOLADE AT LAST

IT is a common tragedy that men, being human, can not see all sides of a question; that a decision right in one light may bring disaster in another. If events had stayed where he left them, François Beaupré and Colonel Couard and his regiment would have won honor and eternal gratitude from Louis Bonaparte for the quarter of an hour's work which made the arsenal theirs. Events, instead of standing still, or going forward, took an unexpected sinister turn, not long after François' going.

The happy Prince, smiling the shadowy smile which made his face winning, stood in the center of triumphant turmoil; his new followers, the men of the forty-sixth, crowded about him shouting, cheering, kissing his hands, and the loyal fourth artillerymen fraternized, embraced, congratulated the men of the line regiment. The narrow courtyard was a hubbub of rapturous excitement, and the

Prince's officers—Montholon, Vaudrey, Voisin, Parquin, D'Hunin, Querelles—these and others whose names Frenchmen knew, surrounded the small figure which yet had so much of royalty, and laughed and chatted light-heartedly. In a few moments, when Colonel Laity's engineers and the third artillery should have arrived, the Prince would have five thousand men under his command. The great game was practically won—Prince Louis was all but Emperor.

Suddenly, above the sea of sound, a commotion was heard at the farther end of the barrack yard. The colonel of the forty-sixth, Colonel Talandier, had arrived. Very loyal to Louis Phillipe, very angry at the scene before him, he would not believe the news. He called excitedly, and the men's voices died down as they saw him gesticulating.

"Soldiers," he cried, "you are deceived! This man for whom you are shouting is an adventurer, an impostor!"

In the shock of silence which followed his words another voice rang out, clear and indignant, the voice of a staff-officer whom they all knew.

"It is not the nephew of the Emperor! *It is the* nephew of Colonel Vaudrey! I recognize him!" the officer cried in a strong staccato, and a gasp as if

:e-water had been scattered went through the rowded place.

There is nothing more absurd in history than the nstant effect of this quick-witted lie. Only with a nercurial French mob, perhaps, could it have suc-:eeded, but it succeeded here with hopeless swift-ness. It flew from mouth to mouth—they were :heated, tricked; the Emperor's nephew, their Prince, had not come; this young man was a make-believe, a substitute, the nephew of an officer; some of the soldiers who had shown most enthusiasm almost lost their minds now in rage.

Colonel Talandier began to form his men; the Prince, composed as ever, yet earnest, swift, tried to rally his, but it was impossible to start anywhere, in this confusion, for line and artillery had become mixed in an unmanageable mob. A word from either Prince or colonel and blood would have flowed. De Querelles begged leave to force a way through the infantry for the Prince. But Louis Bonaparte, considerate and self-controlled would not shed a drop of blood of these men who had hailed him Emperor a moment before—he would not believe them his enemies. He threw himself into the midst of them and they received him with bayonets fixed, even forcing him to parry a blow or

two; he tried to seize a trooper's horse that might be a rallying-point for his column, but failed, too.

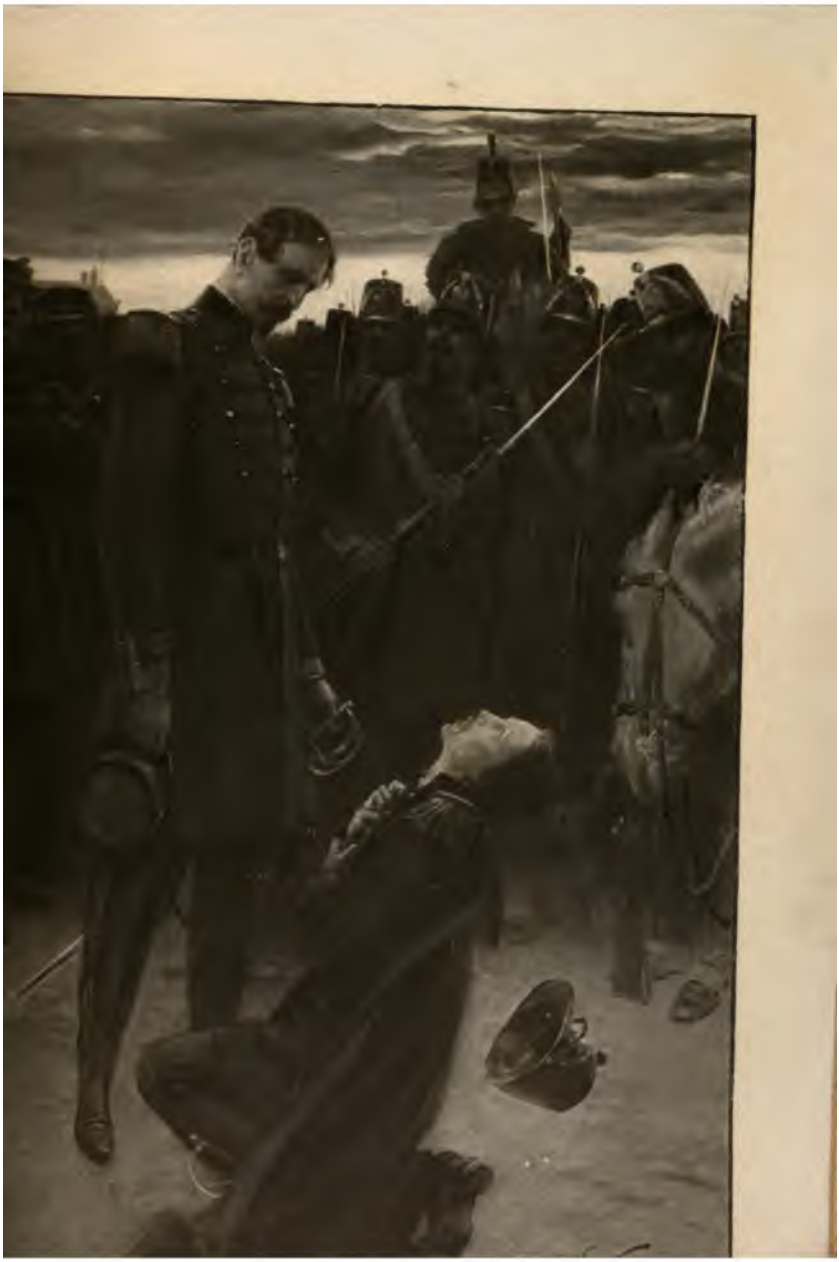
Yet the steadfast mind kept its hope; he glanced every moment toward the ramparts. The third would appear there shortly; it could not be many minutes. They would turn the tide. One glimpse of the solid swinging regiment and the day would be saved—and salvation was certain. The third, coming, would be here any second—Francois-Achille's fulness could be trusted.

Slowly, with his officers crowding about him, he was driven toward the barrack wall, and, suddenly from somewhere, a man was before him, thrusting a bit of paper at him. With a swift movement he had it open and read:

"Destiny throws arsenal into our hands. I have taken third artillery to hold it. I wait to be the news—a jewel for your crown. *Vive l'Empereur!*

"BEAUFORT."

Few men ever heard Louis Napoleon sob, yet the officers who stood about him at that moment caught a sound that wrung them. It meant the end, and they knew it. Passionately he crushed the paper and threw it into the seething mass.



"Fool! He has thrown away the empire," he hissed through set teeth. "If I could run him through!"

Then, quickly, he was himself again. Serenely while the maddened soldiers pressed on him, he turned and spoke a quiet word to his friends, and then, serenely, too, with a gaze that was half contemptuous, half friendly, he let himself be made prisoner.

Yet the fight was not all over even now. On the ramparts, where the Prince and his column should have been, had gathered from the Faubourg Pierre a formidable crowd, who advanced angrily to his rescue, and pelted the line regiment with stones, and cried again and again, *"Vive l'Empereur!"* Colonel Talandier had to reckon with a many-sided trouble. But the heart of it was in his hands, and slowly order and the old rule were coming back.

The tumult of the struggle had quieted, the volatile forty-sixth regiment, returned to its allegiance, stood formed in ranks, in appearance as firm for the king as the everlasting hills, and, at the end of the court was a sad and silent, yet a stately group of men, the Prince who had almost been Emperor and those who had watched slipping with his hope, their hopes of grandeur.

Suddenly a horse's hoofs rang down the lane from the Faubourg; a rider clattered at gallop into the yard and across the front of the soldiers, and every one in the agitated company saw that the man reeling in his saddle was wounded. With blind gaze he stared about as he reined in, and then he caught sight of the sorry group, the Prince and his officers. To François Beaupré, clutching to this world by one thread of duty, this was the victorious Emperor and his triumphant staff. With a choking shout he threw himself from the horse and fell, too far gone to stand, at the Prince's feet.

"Sire, I bring you the arsenal," he stammered painfully, loudly. In the silence of the courtyard one heard every word. "Two wishes—good fairies—" he gasped. And then, his mouth twisting to a smile, "the third—is no matter."

Louis Bonaparte looked down at the man whose dying face stared up at him in a rapture of loyalty; whose life had been consecrated to him; whose death was for him; who had lost him an empire. For a second a struggle shook him, and then the large kindness through which he came nearest to greatness, overflowed. In the career to come was no finer moment, no higher inspiration for Prince Louis than this. He bent close to the glazing eyes.

"Courage!" he said clearly. "Courage, *mon ami.* Live for me and for our country. Live, my brother François—Chevalier Beaupré, Marshal of the Empire." And the Prince's sword flashed out and touched his shoulder.

The other world closing about him François heard—they did not doubt it who saw the eyes flame as a firefly flames out of darkness, and when his lips stirred they knew that he wished to cry once more *"Vive l'Empereur!"*

Frenchmen all, shaken with the living drama, the ruined men who stood about a defeated Prince cried it for him—the old magic cry of the Bonapartes. With képis lifted, as one man, *"Vive l'Empereur!"* the deep voices cried, hailing a lost cause for a lost life. But only the Prince knew that a thought came after; only he caught, on the gasp which let the soul out, a girl's name. He bent quickly again, with an eager assurance, but it was late. The accolade of a higher king had touched his servant, and the knightly soul of François had risen.

THE END

MAY 7 1919